"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

AUTHE YEAR ROWS

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

BROWNIE'S PLOT.

A SERIAL STORY.

By the Author of "Lucy Carter."

CHAPTER VII. BROWNIE OFFERS ADVICE.

Until now, Clement had taken Brownie and all her charms; her willing helpfulness; her sweet, sisterly affection, very much for granted. She was not his sister, only a cousin so many degrees removed; but he had always bracketed her with Maud. Even during the last fortnight he had not thought of Brownie individually, including her rather with that home band which seemed to be leagued against him. Their opinion of him could hardly be worse than his own; only to think ill of one's self is an inviolable prerogative.

But now, Brownie was one apart from all the world, inasmuch as she had shown sympathy with him. For if he could not respect himself, it was none the less desirable that she should respect him.

If ever woman appeared more than mortal to man, Brownie did to Clement on this desolate afternoon. A month ago he would have declared she was a pretty girl, just as he would have said Maud was a beautiful woman; but, flushed with the excitement of her recent effort, the light of tenderest sympathy in her eyes, she came to him all at once as a revelation.

"I suppose I may draw the blind up now?" she said, as they entered the study together. "Poor uncle!"

"Drop that, Brownie," he exclaimed, "or you'll make a woman of me. When I think of the dear old fellow and remember what a brute I have been—— Brownie, but for my miserable folly, he might have been alive now."

"It was your misfortune, not your fault," she quietly corrected.

"It was my fault. Oh, I can see it all at a glance now. Brownie, what is it makes you think differently from the others?"

"Because I know you so well, Clement. I suppose that is why."

"Does not Maud know me well ?"
"Don't speak like that of her," she said,

"Don't speak like that of her," she said, laying her hand gently on his arm. "We can't always think just what we like. If we could, Maud would be the first to believe in you. You see, she cannot understand how it was done——"

"Neither, surely, can you," he ex-

claimed abruptly.

"Of course, it was Uncle Walter. It rests between you and him. You did not do it; therefore, he did." Nothing could be more beautifully simple than Brownie's logic. "I do not know how he did it," she added; "but I will find out, Clement. I will watch him all day long. Oh, I must, I will, puzzle it out somehow. Only, Clement, I want you to promise me to stay

"Don't ask me that," he said; "anything rather than that. Think, Brownie, how can I live if I do stay here?"

in Middleton."

"You do not mean to die if you go away," she retorted. "It is not more difficult to live here than anywhere else."

"Yes, it is. I cannot do here what I may be compelled to do anywhere a thousand miles away. If I remain in England, what is open to me? I will tell you. I might enlist in a cavalry regiment. I should make a fairly good groom. A little practice, and I might become a professional bowler; and there is the crossing opposite Spearing's Bank. I could not stand the place, Brownie. As I go about, one man

turns up his eyes, another turns away his

head. It can't be done!"

"But it must be done," she persisted.
"You must stay in Middleton just for
these six months. Listen, Clement. I
know I shall prove that Uncle Walter
forged that cheque. I am sure of it. But
what will be the use if you are not here
to resp the benefit? And you exaggerate
the evil. All the people will not be against
you. Some will; perhaps most of them;
but not all. Then you have your two
hundred pounds a year, and—and—there
is mine——"

He put this suggestion away impatiently. "Yes, I have my two hundred pounds a year; but you forget those wretched bills. They will have to be paid. Everybody will come down upon me now. Besides, I wish to pay them. No; I must cut it, Brownie."

"Then, Clement, I am disappointed in

you. You are a coward !"

"No one has ever dared tell me so before," he said, firing up. "I don't think

it is true now."

"It is, It is true," she continued, excitedly. "If it were a physical danger, and you thought of nothing but escaping from it, would you not be a coward? What is the difference? I know you cannot remain in this house; but you ought to stay in Middleton. Unless you are Henry's partner within six months you will lose your fortune; and even if Henry is convinced of your innocence, and you are at the other side of the world, how can he make you his partner then? You will promise to stay, Clement?"

"I cannot see the good," he replied; but she saw that he was wavering. "Brownie!" he exclaimed, suddenly, "some one has been putting you up to this.

Who is it?"

"There is no time to explain now," she said. "They will be wondering where I am. You must let me go now, Clement."

He had caught her hand, and still declined to release her until she had replied to his question, which evidently she would have preferred to leave unanswered.

"Who was it, Brownie! It cannot have

been Grayson. Who was it?"

Now she began to speak volubly

enough:

"It was Mr. Anderson. I asked his advice. He has been here so often lately, and auntie has taken quite a fancy to him."

"Has some one else taken a fancy to Anderson as well, Brownie?"

"We all like him—so much. He has been awfully kind to me. Now it must really be good-bye, Clement. Remember, I have your promise to stay; and I, for my part, will devote the next six months of my life to my brother's service."

As he made his way to the hotel through the driving rain, he went again over every word she had uttered. He had not given his promise; she had taken it for

granted.

There seemed many reasons why he should quit Middleton; only one why he should stay. He had lived under the same roof which had sheltered Brownie for twelve years; they had been playmates as children, firm friends upon attaining maturer years. Yet, only to-day, when Fate decreed that they must part, had he awakened to a sense of her merits. It was this awakening which formed the solitary reason for staying where he was—where Brownie would be also.

She believed in him. Well, the past was dead; but if his conduct in the future could justify her faith, then it should indeed be justified. We all know how easy it is to make good resolutions.

He wished she had not dragged in that word brother, and that Anderson had not been admitted to her confidence. He had been almost glad that she was the only one to side with him; it seemed to place him apart with her; they were two by themselves. But now Anderson had come between.

The first thing for Clement to do was to change his quarters, from the "Black Bull" to more economical private apartments. He had paid away all those banknotes on the day after he had shown them to Brownie; and he sat this evening staring at his hotel bill, trying to realise how small a sum remained to carry on the battle, when who should appear but Anderson himself.

To the doctor's apology for intruding upon the evening of such a day, Clement

did not warmly respond.

"I was sent for by Mrs. Northcott this evening," Anderson explained, "and I had a short conversation with your cousin. You must look upon me as her ambassador."

"Well?" said Clement, curtly.

"She is anxious that you shall put in an appearance at the Works to-morrow morning."

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"To subject myself to Grayson's insults," cried Clement.

"That is as it may be. I merely give you my message. But if you had shown a disposition to receive it in a friendly spirit, I think I could show cause why the advice should be acted upon."

"I beg your pardon, Anderson; you must forgive me. I am going off my head,

I think. Fire away."

Following Brownie's argument, Anderson spared no pains to convince his

hearer.

"Your future depends upon Grayson," he concluded. "Grayson, like everybody else, is affected by public opinion. You have not been discharged from the office. Go there as though you were not aware of any reason for absenting yourself. Run away, humble yourself, and you are done for; put on a bold face, and you will live down your — the evil report. Depend upon this; if Grayson finds you at your post to-morrow, he will begin to question-to wonder. I would strongly urge you to go."

"Anderson," exclaimed Clement, "I can't tell you what it is to speak to a man who does not think me utterly

depraved."

"Utterly deprayed? Heaven forbid!" said the doctor, as he rose to go. "Still, Northcott, I ought in honesty to remind you that I am merely your cousin's

envoy."

Clement drew back the hand he had extended towards Anderson, his face flushing angrily. Nevertheless, sorely against his will, but because it was Brownie's wish, he did set forth to High Wood directly after breakfast on the

What a morning it was! The earth was fragrant as she dried herself in the glorious sunshine, like some beautiful nymph of fable. The trees and hedges nymph of fable. were bursting with life, and everything from heaven above to the earth beneath seemed to be working together in one grand harmony.

Clement took his place in Henry Grayson's room to await the principal's arrival. For once Henry was startled from his self-

possession.

"You are the last person I expected to

see here!" he exclaimed. "Yes, I am afraid I have been a little irregular lately," was the cool response.

"Look here, Northcott, this sort of thing is all very well, but the sooner you and I understand one another the better.

Of course, you can't stay here."
Having consented to play this part, Clement determined to carry it off to the best of his ability. So, thrusting his hands in his pockets, he deliberately asked:

"Why not?"

"Because I decline to employ a man whose character will not bear inspection.

That is why not.'

"You had better be careful!" thundered Clement, taking his hands from his pockets, and cool no longer. "You may have

heard certain rumours-

"Rumours! Do you think because Spearing spared you, and, for your father's sake, did not compel you to stand in the dock like a felon-do you think because of this you can ride the high horse over me? Bah, man! don't double your fists; you do not frighten me. You know the responsibility that rests upon me. oftener you cross my path, the more difficult you will make it to perform that duty should the occasion arise.

"It seems that you have performed it already. You condemned me before you became my judge," retorted Clement.

"How could it be otherwise?" Grayson demanded. "Ask any man, woman, or child in Middleton-you cannot bring me one who thinks you are an honest man."

"By Heaven, you are wrong there," ied Clement, striding forward and

grasping Grayson's collar.

His adversary was but a child in his hands; Clement could do what he pleased with him. But all at once he realised the blessed truth of his own words. There was one who believed in him yet. His hands fell to his side, and without another word he walked out of the room.

Thus did he follow Brownie's advice to take his usual place at the Works. Whether or not he had sown the seeds of doubt in Henry Grayson's mind, this is certain-he had added to his prejudice, and increased

his aversion.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MEETING AND A PARTING.

Brownie's position at Eastwood had become somewhat difficult, inasmuch as her alliance with Clement necessarily implied a state of warfare against Mr. Litton.

A few weeks after Mr. Northcott's funeral, Henry Grayson ventured to put in an appearance one afternoon, when the conversation soon turned upon Clement's continued presence in the town.

"He might just as well have stayed in this house," said Mrs. Northcott. "I must tell you that my dear brother has been generous enough to forgive Clement. Few men would have done that. I consider it

shows a large mind, Henry."

"But don't you think ?" asked Brownie, with the most ingenuous air in the world, "don't you think that those who have travelled a great deal-like Uncle Walter, you know-always have large minds? You never tell us about all the places you have seen, Uncle Walter. Fancy, Henry, Uncle Walter had not been to England for ten years. Now, I wonder how often you wrote to auntie-very often I suppose."

"Your uncle was never a good correspondent," said Mrs. Northcott, amiably.

"You forget, Mary," he answered, "you forget how many letters were lost. Wrecks and that scrt of thing, Grayson. I wrote often enough."

"I wish you would get me some more roses, Margaret," said Mrs. Northcett;

"perhaps Henry will help you."
"Wait whilst I unchain Lion," said Brownie, demurely, as Henry followed her through the open window.

"I wonder Clement did not take his dog with him," responded Grayson.

"He is my dog now," was the answer; accompanied by so much fondling of the St. Bernard, that Henry's dislike was

turned to envy.
"Margaret," he said, looking down
who would "Margaret," he said, looking down spitefully at the huge animal, who would persist in walking between them, "how is it that you think differently from every

one else about Clement?"

"Surely you are not sorry that just one person is able to think well of him," she answered; and her tone warned Henry to avoid such dangerous ground for the present.

When they returned to the drawingroom, Mr. Litten was no longer there.

"I wish I had known Uncle Walter had gone," quoth Brownie, "I need not have chained Lion."

"Then his highness does not approve of

your uncle?" suggested Henry.
"Oh, no," she answered cheerfully.
"Of course Lien hates all Clement's

enemies."

Mrs. Northcott was unusually severe with Brownie upon hearing this, while to Maud, her cousin's conduct was incomprehensible. Brownie seemed to be attempting the difficult task of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. As a rule,

her treatment of Mr. Litton was all that his fond sister could wish, and better than he himself had anticipated. Yet at times she would indulge in covert sarcasms or candid expressions of enmity, which were trying to every member of the family.

Anderson was still in daily attendance on Mrs. Northcott, and on the Wednesday after Henry Grayson's visit, she requested

him to interview Brownie.

"Your aunt tells me you are not well," he began; "she has asked me to prescribe for you."

But Brownie objected. It was a mere headache; it was nothing at all-a cold-PETER OF THE she was quite well.

He did not press the matter-as Dr. Stanhope would have done-but contented himself with persuading her to spend more

time out of doors.

"Well," said Maud, "you are bound to go to Mrs. Clow's to morrow. She lives at Barker's Cottages, you know, Mr. Anderson, and Brownie goes to read to her every Thursday. She is stone deaf; but Brownie carries a bag as well as a Mrs. Clow has been neglected You must go to-morrow, Brownie, and I will walk with you."

Now, as the doctor was bidding Maud good-bye, he was careful to enquire at what hour Brownie usually started upon her

mission.

"At three o'clock," answered Maud. "You don't think the sun will be too hot

for her, do you?

Nothing was farther from his thoughts, as, indeed, Maud guessed easily enough, when, before they had gone many yards on their way the next afternoon, she saw Mr. Anderson bimself coming towards them.

"He evidently means to see that his prescription is properly carried out," she said; and when Anderson turned to accompany them, devoting all his attention to Brownie, Maud began to feel sincerely sorry for Henry Grayson.

At Barker's Cottages Brownie left the others, staying to read to deaf Mrs. Clow for one hour by the clock. stepping into the fresh air once more, the first person she saw was Clement.

"I hope-I hope you don't mind," he said, with a hesitation which was perfectly new to him. "I came last week, and the week before as well; the third time proves lucky.

"You hope I don't mind, Clement! Fancy your talking such nonsense! Of

course, I am very pleased."

He himself hardly knew why he had apologised; only that whilst she was infinitely dearer to him than ever, she yet seemed far less near than in the old days before he had partaken of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

While she replied to his enquiries concerning those at home, he led the way to a path across the fields. The grass was down; busy haymakers tossed it about in a fashion that was apparently aimless; the lark singing overhead charmed away every

vestige of a cloud.

"This is not the nearest way, Clement." "That depends upon your destination. Don't they say that all roads lead to heaven? At any rate, this particular one often leads to church. It is the lover's walk, you know, Brownie."

"But I don't want to go to church,

Clement."

"Not now. But the time may come, you know. Well, to go from one extreme to another-from church to- how is our precious uncle going along ?"

"Oh, his arm is much better. Anderson is quite astonished that it heals so rapidly. Of course, uncle still wears the sling. I have one little piece of news for you. He has had a visitor."

"A visitor? I thought he had no

friends in this hemisphere!"

"So did we all. Auntie was very much surprised. She asked him to stay the night, and he did. We were very glad when the morning came—Maud and I."

"You did not like him?" enquired

Clement.

"Oh, no! You could not call him a gentleman, you know. Uncle says he is his partner; I don't know in what. But it is important, Clement. Uncle Walter was supposed to know nobody at all. If he had a confederate, the mystery of the forgery is solved at once."

"I don't like the whole business, Brownie," said Clement, as she stooped to pick a piece of meadow-orchis from a haycock. "You are turning yourself into a kind of amateur detective, and the occupation is degrading. The man is a scoundrel; you ought to have nothing to do with

him."

"You do not dislike it more than I do," she answered, opening wide her eyes at this consideration from one so thoughtless as Clement; "but you forget that I am

added, warmly, "I am not worth it, and nobody knows better than myself how useless it is. What am I that you should suffer on my account?"

"You are my brother," she answered, "I am doing no dropping her eyes. more than a sister ought to do. I have

half won a convert already."

"So you still discuss me with Anderson," exclaimed Clement, not doubting for a moment to whom she referred.

"There is no one else, Clement."

"Not Maud?" he suggested.

"Yes," she said, hesitatingly; "but it is so difficult to explain—to you. You see, Maud's opinions are very pronounced. She would do anything in the wide world to help you; only she thinks—she can't help thinking-

"Spare yourself, Brownie; I know all about it. She thinks her brother a scoundrel; and, by Heaven, she is not far wrong! But, for that matter, Anderson's opinion is

much the same."

"Ah, but Mr. Anderson himself is so different from everybody else," she said, naïvely; "he tries to put himself in one's place; to reason from my standpoint. That makes such a difference; and if he could help us, I am sure he would."

"I would rather be without his help for my part," Clement declared; and by this time they were close to the lane again. To avoid a somewhat awkward stile, Brownie made for a gap in the hedge hard by; but, before she could reach it, Clement caught her hand.

"Promise me not to bother about this business of mine any further," he cried,

earnestly.

"You forget how much depends upon my interference," she expostulated; "your good name, your honour-"

"My name is already a bad one; as for my honour, nobody can smirch it or clear it but myself. Brownie, I swear I do not There is only value the money a rap. one thing in the world that I prize-"

She disengaged her hand, and, with a nervous little laugh, sprang from the meadow down to the lane a foot or two beneath. A horse was pulled up sharply, only just in time, or its hoofs would have been upon her. The lady who rode it bowed gaily to Clement, and continued her way.

"Don't you think you women are rather cool to Mrs. Oliver?" said Clement, as

not acting solely for my own pleasure."

"No, I don't forget," he said, "I know that you are acting for mine. "But," he

Brownie brushed the dust from her gloves.
"Don't you think you men make up for us?" she laughed. "You know I have

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not been introduced, Clement; and, for that matter, I am not anxious to be. There is Maud," she added, as his sister came into

"Mr. Anderson was just asking after you, Clement," said Maud, anxious to find a safe topic.

"Did you meet him down the town,

then I" enquired Clement.

"How mysterious you are, Brownie," she laughed, somewhat constrainedly; "especially considering the manner in which he devotes himself to you."

"I must say good-bye," said Clement, coming to a standstill in the middle of the lane; and without another word, or even a shake of the hand, he turned abruptly and

retraced his steps.

He believed that Brownie had refrained from mentioning her meeting with Anderson of set purpose. It was annoying to think that she should wish to hide anything from him; still more annoying to know that it was the discussion of his own interests which drew Brownie and the doctor together; that he formed a link between them, which bade fair to be a very lasting one.

He walked away from her this afternoon, telling himself that if she could never be more to him than a sister-and she had harped so often upon this string of late-he would rather, far rather, that she had gone against him with the rest.

And, at the best, how dared he attempt to win her love! Honour seemed to forbid its acceptance, even if it had been laid at his feet—a very unlikely contingency.

"So your charming cousin has forsaken

you, Mr. Northcott."

It was Mrs. Oliver, returning from her ride, who spoke. She looked deliciously cool this glowing afternoon; her light-grey habit, short enough to expose two or three inches of a small brown boot, her white straw hat, suited her to perfectiona small fairy-queen of a woman, very pleasant to look upon.

"We met my sister," he answered,

simply.

Mrs. Oliver turned her violet eyes upon him with a tantalising expression of mock

sympathy.

"Oh," she laughed, perhaps a little too loudly, and showing her even white teeth rather too freely, "that is a quite sufficient Well, if I may say so without reason. earning your lasting hatred, I am rather pleased. I have been looking for an opportunity to speak to you. I want to strongest and roughest individuals of a

know when you will come up to the Nook to dine. Captain Oliver will be so

pleased."

Clement was in a state of mind to appreciate the slightest overture of friendship. He had never yet visited the Olivers, and he was conscious that Brownie would be better pleased if he refrained from doing

"It is awfully kind of you," he answered. "I will come whenever you like. My engagements are not particularly

numerous just now."

"Then suppose we say Tuesday," she said, dropping the reins to adjust a tress of her yellow hair, which none but herself

could have known to be awry.
"I shall be delighted," answered Clement, regarding her with admiration in spite of himself; and, with a nod and a smile, she cantered away.

SHILLINGBURY SKETCHES.

VANISHING TYPES.

In the days before astronomy was taught in elementary schools, nurses would sometimes, in looking up at the spacious firmament, inform their young charges that a star vanished, and another one came to sight, every minute. Whether there ever was the least groundwork for this teaching, I cannot say; but it is abundantly clear to me that many types in the sphere of humanity, which have always seemed as stable and persistent as the heavenly bodies, are changing every day, every hour, and even every minute. The observer, as soon as he has grasped the fact that the order of things is continually changing, and proceeds to record his discovery, usually comes to the conclusion that the world, as he sees it, is rocking along at a furious rate towards an abyss of deterioration, and that types are being transformed at a rate hitherto unknown. As I sat in the railway-carriage, on my way back to town after my autumn holiday in my native country, I felt the spirit of prophecy strong upon me, and I was prepared to pour forth my lamentations in due form over the terrible havoc that time was making on every side, and I was fully assured that the message I had to deliver to the world was a perfectly new one.

The type—the human type, that is which comes to be quoted as representative, is usually the idealisation of the given class. Thus my ideal farm-labourer, whom I am going to place in the forefront of my gallery of extinct specimens, will be fashioned from the memory of extremes rather than of the average. A portrait-painter, it is admitted, can only present his sitter in one of the many moods which the least variable of us put on in the course of a single day; consequently, he is allowed to choose the most striking and most interesting—in other words, the most favourable—of these moods; and there is no reason why a writer should not claim a like privilege.

I am sure that at no time could a set of labourers like Samuel Dingley have been found working on one farm; I much doubt whether one could have been met in every Samuel was a person no one village. could forget in a hurry after once having met him; and to me his personality stands out vividly enough after the lapse of There is somethirty years and more. thing to grasp in treating of him, whereas the dull souls who toiled by his side have dropped, unnoticed, into the village churchyard, and have left no sign. John Lee was a farm-labourer, so was James Long; and, having said so much about them, one has said all. The pen of the transatlantic novelist is reputed to have the power of transfiguring the commonplace, and clothing it with interest. It certainly covers a vast superficial area of paper in the attempt, and perhaps it might, if it were to try, make Adam Bedes and Peggottys out of the John and James aforesaid. It may indeed have done as much already; but I can only say I have not yet come across the volume in which this task has been achieved.

Samuel Dingley is alive yet; but he was an old man to all appearance when I first saw him. He was then working for old Mr. Suttaby of Hedgelands, who had been his employer, with one or two intervals, for the last forty years. Mr. Suttaby always came to Shillingbury church on Sunday mornings, and during my holidays he would very often carry me off, nothing loth, to spend the rest of the day, and sometimes for a longer visit, at the farm. Then it was that I first became acquainted with Samuel, who would be chopping turnips for Mr. Suttaby's fat bullocks, in spite of the day being Sunday. I well remember the shock I felt the first time I saw Samuel hard at work just as if it had been Monday-I, too, having listened only

the decalogue against Sabbath-breakingbut in answer to my questions on the subject, and to quiet any scruples, Mr. Suttaby tempered the severity of the law by an infusion of equity in the form of a remark that if the bullecks weren't fed there would be no roast beef Mr. Suttaby was churchfor dinner. warden, and always joined in the responses in a loud voice, so I concluded that he must be right in this doctrine of his, and that Moses must have had certain mental reservations when he published the fourth But bullock-feeding was commandment. only a Sunday occupation of Samuel's. On week days he was always to be found all by himself in a solitary field-barn, threshing out with a flail the barley which had been carted into it at the last harvest; and whenever my visit happened to be prolonged beyond Sunday, I always made my way thither. Long before arriving at the barn I could hear the stroke of Samuel's flail as it descended upon the rustling row of barley. The barn was an enormous one; and when it was full up to the rafters it seemed as if it would take him all his lifetime to beat out the kernels from the vast mass of straw with his puny wooden It would have been hard to find a more delightful play-place than this barn made when it was in course of being emptied of its clean, fragrant barley. To get it out conveniently Samuel would cut the mass into steep precipices; and it was a fearful joy to jump or slide down these on to the springy, elastic bit of stack left beneath. Then it was possible to climb up amongst the spars and rafters of the old barn-roof; and often, in the spring, prey, rare and strange, would reward our climb. Sparrows' eggs were almost too common to take; but sometimes we came upon starlings' and jackdaws'. My companion at such times would be a small boy named Ebenezer, a grandson of Samuel Dingley. Happy Ebenezer! He grew up in a sort of civilised savagery, unvexed by the terrors of the school-attendance officer, or of the fourth standard. Ebenezer once confided to me that, at a certain period of his life, he had known his letters; but that he wasn't sure if he could go through them now. I have since then come across similar results in past pupils of schools dominated by certificated teachers, and visited every year by Her Majesty's In-

been Monday—I, too, having listened only Ebenezer and I would spend most of our a few hours before to the denunciations of time in "playing at robbers." A cave

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would be formed, and in this I, the robber, would lurk, waiting till Ebenezer, the traveller, should pass by. Then I would dart forth, and after dispossessing him of all his wealth—generally consisting of a marble and a half-eaten apple - would proceed to put him to death with all the refinements of torrure commonly practised by the brave of romance. As a reward I would tell Ebenezer, after he had been restored to life, all the tales of brigandage and highway robbery I could remember; for though slow at his letters, he had the keenest appetite for fiction. I have lost sight of Ebenezer for many years, and I trust he has never taken to the road or to burglary as a prefession. I once heard of his appearance before the Shillingbury Bench on a charge of poaching, and I was strongly moved to pay the fine and costs, having an uneasy feeling that in knocking over the hare in question he may have been merely translating into action the principles I had instilled into his mind during my youthful storytelling.

But delightful as my games with Ebenezer were, I found a much keener pleasure in listening to Samuel's discourse, while he would be eating his frugal dinner during the noontide hour. I was very young then; but I had sense enough to see that Samuel's view of life as it lay around him, and of the world in general, was very different from that of his fellow-toilers; and that if he could have got his foot upon the first rung of the ladder, he would not have gone on all his life threshing barley with a flail, at a remuneration of twelve shillings a week.

Samuel was a sort of portent amongst the agricultural labourers of his day-by a trifling liberty of expression he might have been called a Saul, instead of a Samuel, amongst the prophets-for he could read, and write, and cypher. His reading was of that laborious style which makes it necessary to repeat every word with the lips in a hoarse whisper; but Samuel's appetite for knowledge was keen, and he took in more ideas from printed words than many more accomplished students. Such ideas as he had mastered revealed to him, in dim fashion, the composition of the social mass of which he was an atom; and, after a little, he began to speculate as to how it had been gathered together, and whether it was irrevocably written in the book of fate that it must rest as he found it so Samuel's intellectual eyesight was not very strong as yet.

"Well, the world is a rum place, and life is a rum go," was a favourite reflection of his at the close of a speech when the notions that were seething in his brain failed to find adequate expression in his halting words.

This remark has not special claim to originality. Many of us, I dare say, have felt inclined to use it, or words of similar purport, when the mystery of existence has been more than usually dark and perplexing; but it has a virtue which is not always found in original utterances. strictly and literally true. Life is a "rum go," for most of us; and Samuel had made this discovery. He had also ventured to controvert Candide's view, and to maintain that this world is not the best possible of all worlds; but he had got very little beyond the negative stage. He might now and then have perceived faint visions of a good time coming for himself and his fellows; but his brain had not gathered sufficient strength to figure how this good time was to be brought about, or to conceive the necessity for clearing the ground to make room for a new social edifice.

Samuel was born before his time. forest of privilege grew rank and impenetrable around him, and the sharp axe of the ballot-protected suffrage had not been put into his hand. Ebenezer, his grandson, if he be alive, stands in a very different position, and, if he reads the journals written for him and his class, and listens to the spoken words of the village politician of the new school, is probably quite ready to assent to more drastic reforms than ever my old friend Samuel dreamt of.

From the influence of my home surroundings, and from every word I had ever read or listened to, my bent of mind was, even at the early age of twelve, thoroughly set in the direction of law, and order, and authority; and some of Samuel's utterances seemed to me to be very terrible indeed. It sounded altogether unreasonable that, in a question between rich and poor, the latter could possibly have right on their side; yet Samuel maintained stoutly that they had it in nine cases out The agricultural labourer in these of ten. days would as soon have thought of striking as of putting on two clean shirts a week; but there now and then came to us in Shillingbury-accompanied generally with a rise long as the world should endure. Poor in the price of coal-rumours of strikes,

and sometimes of riot and bloodshed in those vague and distant regions known as

"the North," and "the Shires."

I used to wonder and feel indignant that the men should be so wicked and foolish as to refuse to work for the wages offered to them; and I thought that Samuel must have taken leave of his senses, when he affirmed, one day, that the men were just as right to get the highest possible wages for their labour as the masters were to sell their coal at the best price in the market. Then he showed me the source of these revolutionary doctrines -a collection of tracts, bought, no doubt, from some incendiary tinker, and said I might read them, if I would take care to put them out of sight in case Mr. Suttaby should look in at the barn-door.

There I read, amongst other astounding and monstrous statements, that the land belonged to the people who tilled it, and not to men like Sir Thomas Kedgbury and Mr. Winsor; that the French people were quite right in cutting off the heads of the King and Queen; and that if other Kings and Queens were served in the same fashion the world would be a better place for the people who laboured therein. There was very faint condemnation of rick-burning and open approval of machine-breaking; but on these two latter points the writer failed to win Samuel's

approval. "Heaven ha' sent us the corn to eat, and them as set fire to it are fools and rogues as well; and, about the troshin' machines - if they as went about the country a-breakin' on 'em had known as much about flail troshin' as I do, they'd ha' been glad as somebody had been clever enough to inwent a machine to do the

work for 'em."

Mr. Suttaby was a hard man, and unsympathetic to his labourers: but he must have liked Samuel Dingley, for he would often sit on the barn-stool and hold converse with him by the hour together. I noticed that on these occasions Samuel was careful not to bring out the more startling of his articles of belief. This condescension on Mr. Sattaby's part was all the more remarkable from the fact that Samuel was a Primitive Methodist, and this sect Mr. Suttaby hated as he hated Free Trade and couch-grass. Samuel, when he was about forty years of age, had "got religion" very powerfully, having been converted at a camp-meeting held on Pudsey Heath. This religion was made up of a collection of Calvinistic beliefs so terrible that, when he expounded it to me, I could not repress a shudder at the fate which seemed inevitable for me, and wished that I had

never been born.

But our talk, as a rule, had very little to do with theology. Samuel evidently held the belief that, the greater the sinner, the greater would be the saint; and he would give me long descriptions of his doings in his unregenerate days, before he had been converted; and, according to these narrations, he certainly owed much to good fortune that he did not spend the best part of his early manhood in prison. I have since suspected that Samuel, with a pardonable vanity, and a wish to exhibit his present worth by bringing up the past in its darkest aspect to heighten the contrast, made himself out to be much worse than he really was. He worked, when he was a young man, for a cousin of Mr. Suttaby, who held a farm lying in a sea-coast village on the other side of the county, the salt marshes adjacent to which were a favourite haunt of certain fishingboats, belonging to a neighbouring port, which came thither for the purpose of landing spirit-kegs taken on board from the Dutchmen out at sea. In these days Samuel was an active shore auxiliary of the smuggling fishermen; and I was never tired of hearing how, on dark nights, his master's horses and carts would be requisitioned and stationed at the end of a lane leading down to the salt marshes, to await the arrival of the boat which, after dodging the coastguardsmen, would slip up the creek with a score or two of kegs of Schiedam in tow; how the master would see, plainly enough, when he made his morning round, that his horses had been out in the night, but would cease complaining and say no more when he caught sight of the end of a cask, half-concealed under the straw in a corner of the stable; and how, after a successful run, nearly all the men, and a good proportion of the women of the parish would be drunk, and the whole place a hell of debauchery, as long as the spirit lasted. Next, in due season, when the woods would be full of game, Samuel and a chosen band would sally forth and make a clean sweep of the Squire's pheasants before the great battue of the year. There were three or four pitched battles fought with the keepers; and, after a bit, by reason of plentiful repetition, I got to know all the details of these as well as Samuel himself. There

was one in which Mr. Winsor's headkeeper got beaten about the head so badly that he never recovered, and went about a hopeless imbecile for the rest of his days; and another in which Jim Warracker, one of the leading poachers, was shot in the thigh, and would have bled to death if Samuel hadn't bound up the wound with a

bit of his own shirt.

"Ah, they was badgoin's on in them days, they was," Samuel said; "but as I was a-readin' in one o' them tracts as I lent you t' other day, 'twas all the fault o' the law. and not o' the poor chaps as took it into their heads as they'd like a drop o' summat warm of a cold night, or a taste of a hare as was made for them just as much as for Squire Winsor. If 't hadn't been for the law, they wouldn't ha' got into no mischief.'

It was, I well remember, a startling revelation for me to hear it affirmed that the law could possibly be in the wrong, or that anybody who broke it might be a martyr, and not a criminal. My notions of public morality were very crude in those days; but lately I have often recalled to mind Samuel's quaint exposition of his revolutionary position in ethics, and wondered whether any of the great contemporary political leaders may have sat in their youth at the feet of teachers of a like tone of thought. Bearing in mind how often one hears repeated the doctrine that, if obedience to a particular law offends one's conscience, one has only to break it, it seems as if certain of these must have gone through a training like mine, and have laid to heart its maxims more thoroughly than I did. At other times I invert the position, and wonder how it is that, having listened in my tender years to such doctrines, I have failed to become a political leader.

In his meditations on the affairs of this present world, Samuel Dingley, as I have already remarked, did not get far beyond the discovery that things were in a queer tangle, and that he was not born to set them right; for, having come to the conclusion that the world was a "rum place," and life a "rum go," he made no effort to bring this world more into the likeness of what he dimly perceived an ideal society ought to be. But with the affairs of the world to come it was quite another matter. The world around him was a nut too hard for him to crack, an oyster which no sword of his could open. The squire, and the parson, and the policeman stood guarding all the gates of the fortress which must and oblivion.

first be overthrown; and, with a despairing sense of his impotence, he abandoned this task to those who should come after him, and set to work to settle his relations with the unseen world to his own satisfaction. Samuel, like most other people, found it vastly more easy to build airy castles than castles of brick and stone. His valour recoiled from an encounter with "the powers that be" here below; but in his spiritual conflict he made short work of those invincible foes who, since John Bunyan's time, have been reported to lay in wait on all sides to trip up the feet of the earthly pilgrim bound for the celestial city, and he soon brought himself to a comfortable state of final assurance: a state no doubt all the more full of consolation for him from the fact that it involved an article of belief, to the effect that the rich man would find it a hard matter to attain those blessings which Samuel Dingley held virtually within his grasp.

Samuel's flail has long ceased to beat, and his heart also, and he is gone to solve the great mystery. I did not leave the district last autumn without walking out to Hedgelands and paying a visit to the old barn where I had spent so many happy hours. The field-road leading to it was deeply rutted; but the ruts looked like the ruts of many years ago. The whole Several tiles place had a deserted air. were gone from the roof, and the grass was growing green, and thistles and docks rearing their unlovely foliage before the doors. I looked in at the broken wicket, and found that it was used as a storehouse for broken implements and other débris of

the farm.

Barns have little use in modern agriculture, and in another generation or two it will probably have fallen to ruin; and, if the ivy and other kindly forces of Nature do their work well, it will be just as fair to look upon as half the ruins that people go miles to see. To me there was a deeper pathos about its incipient decay. It was as the tomb of an old friend—the grave of those happy times when I had romped with Ebenezer, or sat listening to his grandfather's discourse.

But, after all, the men who had toiled beneath its roof for the last century and more, belonged to a type which is now fast becoming as extinct as the bustard which used to roam wild over the adjacent heaths; so, perhaps, it was only meet that the old barn should follow them into ruin

TRIOLETS.

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Golden daffodils I bring, Love, from out the fields to-day. As a pledge of coming Spring, Golden daffodils I bring, Which did weary Winter fling Earthwards as he went his way. Golden daffodils I bring, Love, from out the fields to-day.

II.

Love is kindliest in Spring, So all sweetest singers say. Is it true, love, this they sing— Love is kindliest in Spring? Tell me, you, for whom I bring Proof that Spring is born to-day, Is love kindliest in Spring, As all wisest poets say?

A PRODIGAL.

A PICTURE FROM THE THIRTY YEARS'
WAR.

"LET her get down and walk, the baggage! Why should she ride, day after day, while we have to tramp it on foot, and carry the babies and the bundles into the bargain? And all, forsooth, because she has a gold ring on her finger! Much that ring was worth at Jankow!"

"Hold thy prating tongue, and have a care to thyself! Black Rudolph was not always so tender to the women as he is since Jankow; and thou'dst best not rouse

him."

A long cavalcade winds slowly up the hilly road. Some leagues to westward behind it still rises the smoke from the sacked and plundered village. At the hill's foot lies an outlying homestead — this morning peaceful, plenteous, and happy; now deserted, ruined. In the low western sky—marking their track of pillage—hangs the red evening sun, slowly sinking in a maze of glorious hues; while through the swaying branches of the pine-trees, which border the roadside, his crimson and golden gleams shine like fire and blood upon the tarnished helmets and cuirasses of the mounted free-lances.

There is but little order in the wild procession: the officers on horseback, the men in broken companies singing wild songs in memory of their victories; behind, the waggons piled high with corn which, this morning, stood in some thrifty stackyard, or with the household goods and provisions snatched ruthlessly from terrified and unoffending villagers. Round these last trudge the women, to whose skirts cling

barefoot little children, and two or three captive girls weeping bitterly for their lost homes and murdered kinsfolk. And, last of all-spart, a few paces from the rest, one hand upon the bridle of his horse, the other clutching at his blade-a man walks alone, stern and silent. He has heard all, yet only his grim silence and the involuntary handling of his weapon mark his smouldering wrath, his resolve to postpone vengeance for the present. behind him in the waggon, tenderly cared for, and shielded as far as possible from the rude sights around, lies the only being who, since his boyhood, has awakened softer feelings in his heart, one who lies dying, amid the horrors of a free lance camp, without one other hand to tend or care for her, one other heart to mourn her loss.

This is Black Rudolph; before Jankow the wildest, wickedest, most ruthless of all that daredevil crew, and she is his wife. Ah! in that word lies all her desolation, her loneliness; nothing in all the world could have so surely and so utterly cut her off from every womanly care, and tender-

ness, and comfort.

To these angry, clamorous women, tired out with a long day of pillage, and the burden of a booty which but this morning seemed the most coveted treasure upon earth, it is an intolerable offence that Rudolph's wife should ride safe and easy—blest in so strong and tender a protector—while they must keep the road.

Rudolph's ominous scowl is answered by looks as black; fierce taunts arise again, until, at some word flung with more angry daring than the rest, the free-lance makes a swift and furious stride towards

the speaker.

Then, like the bursting of a mill-dam, the smouldering fury of the whole camp breaks out; there is a short and angry altercation—blows—and the deep and sudden silence of surprise and fear.

The Captain of the band rides back, and furiously demands the cause of all this brawling. Half fearful, terrified at their own prowess—as a venturesome hunter gazes afar off at the dying lion—the free-lances fall back, and point in silence to the fainting, fallen figure of their sometime comrade.

Rudolph has sunk upon the bank which skirts the road, his head falls on his breast beside the clutching hands which strive to close his death-wound.

"Is't fatal?" coolly says the Captain.

Yes; Black Rudolph has got his death. "March on!" the Captain says.

They move. A dying soldier more or less-a good companion gone-what matter now? They move; but as the heavy waggon stirs again, Black Rudolph struggles once more to his feet, and furiously calls on them to leave his wife.

"Put the wench down," the Captain sneers; and the band goes on its way, regardless, save in coarsest mockery, of the two helpless, dying fellow-creatures left alone amidst the coming night.

Far up the winding slope of the pine-clad hill, the man can watch them as he turns after them. Even as they slowly disappear beyond its shelving brow, sounds from the band are borne again to him upon the

evening breez?

The laughter and wild songs; the distant, angry grumbling of those who march last; the furious oaths of the leader, sound somewhat strange in the quiet, darkening country, and through that shadow which is falling heavy on him now. He raises his hand after them as they pass, and curses them with the bitterness of unforgiving death. So much for man's reward! The old companions whom he has been with for years, the Captain he has served faithfully through all his changing fortunes, can turn from him with scorn in this his greatest hour of need, without a glance of kindness and regret. They have left him alone, wounded, helpless, dying! There is more than the bitterness of mere death in the thought! This is his gain, his recompense for all that he gave up years ago when he joined that lawless company.

He slowly turns from the last sound of their retreating footsteps, and, with such feeble strength as he can muster, draws his wife's head upon his knees. It is all he can do for her now-he who would have-who has-protected her with his

life!

How carefully, how tenderly, he raises her, though it is agony for him to move; while the name, which for years he has not spoken, save in coarsest mcckery, save in curses on his faithless friends, rises up in prayer as he gazes on his wife.

Slowly the low, red sun sinks over the darkening landscape, its warmth and light lingeringly dying, as the strength of his life and manhood are dying in him. The last bright tints fade from fiery red and crange into dull crimson, dim magenta, dusky purple, like the last glowing embers | horror, the cruel glory, the mad pleasure

of some stupendous fire; deep silence reigns over the wide landscape-only the night-breeze stirs amid the pine-trees. He sees the day fade with the apathy of utter hopelessness—the hopelessness of despair. Death is coming with the darkness and

the night.

He does not fear death; far, far too familiar is it to him for him to fear it. He has looked at it, nor shrunk from it, for many years, and now it has come to himas he knew it would—suddenly, with swift, unerring certainty. He could welcome it, and die as a free-lance should-carelessly, bravely, desperately—if it were not for her. Ah! there is an unbearable agony in the thought that he is leaving her; an anguish of very helplessness in the remembrance that his death deprives her of her only protector-the only one who loves her. Tears, that have been strangers to his eyes for more than twenty years, are in them now as he gazes on his wife. It is his agony of pain; his growing weakness; his helpless, hopeless despair; the misery of parting with his unprotected darling, which have wrung them from him - ay, and something more than these !

As he clasps her poor, cold fingers in his own, he neither sees nor hears. His thoughts have wandered far over years that are dead and gone to scenes which, until three years ago, he had never recalled. The life of recent years falls from him-the reckless joy of its dangers, and its pleasures, and its triumphs-and scenes from holier, happier days rise up before his dying mind. He is a boy again—sole son of honest peasant parents-bold, lighthearted, loving, proud of his position as

their future prop and stay.

It has grown dusk around him; but he seems to stand once again in the bright sunshine of that summer's morning twenty years ago, when they were all around him and he took his last farewell. He is again the brave, frank young soldier, eager to serve his country and defend the right. Again he is setting out in life, with all the glory and honour of his calling to be won. What a proud embrace his father gives him! How his mother drives back her tears as she bids Heaven bless him! What prayers are said for the absent lad; what good counsel does he carry with him; and oh! what hopes, what resolutions, what fair dreams, never to be fulfilled!

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And yet another scene—that night at Jankow — twenty years after. All the

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of that night! Surely now the fierce glare of flames illumines the pine forest with a glow redder than the departed sun? Is not that fair young girl still clinging to his arm, with faith even in her wildest terror, and praying him to save her?

Ah, that was the turning point of his mad career—that trust in him who had thrown away his soul; in him, from whom even the most hardened shrank!

Then came the time when, for the first time, with all the force of his strong nature, he longed for better things. For, out of pity to the friendless girl he made his wife, grew love; and love so pure, and humble, and unselfish, that it entirely changed the man. For her sake, he hated his rude life, which had of old been all he cared for; and, as he saw her dying of the rough, cruel life he led, he hoped again passionately for the peaceful pleasures of his father's home; he longed for the father's pardon which he dared not to entreat.

Alas! it is too late. He is leaving her so fast, so certainly, that no more remains to him but one farewell before he goes; he, whom she has leaned upon and trusted for these three short years, is failing her at

He can do nothing more for her!

It is with uncontrollable anguish that he grasps her slender fingers, as if, in touching her, he sought fresh vigour. Oh, if he could but make life safe for her before he If that wronged and argry father were but here, that he might throw away his shame, and pride, and fear, and ask forgiveness!

He is strangely weak-his very thoughts grow indistinct, as if he had not strength to frame them; yet there comes back to him, through the very darkness of his despair, some words that seem born of his hopeless longing: "I will arise—and go

to my father."

In the deeply-blue vault overhead a few stars have come out; the faint green stream of light to westward has faded into the darkness of the whole firmament; over the ever-swaying, ever-signing. It silver moonbeams herald her coming. It ever-swaying, ever-sighing pine-trees the It does death stay his hand?

The night is cold, and the chilly moonlight is even colder. She has drawn closer to him, but his arm has scarcely strength to clasp her now. Surely, though slowly, life is ebbing from him; even her dear, my son!""

low voice, which recalls him, as she breathes his name, from the very gates of the grave, grows fainter on his ear.

Again she speaks, and her frail hand is pointing to the coppies in the valley. Again he hears—he answers. He starts forward, drawing his cold hand across his failing sight. Can it be true? or is it the mockery of death ?

No! there are lights below, which he can see-which he, please Heaven, may

reach.

"Little one," he says, hope bringing

strength, "canst thou walk ?

He has risen; and she rises, too, still clinging to the arm which never yet has failed her. Alas, there is no longer strength in it. He is leaning upon her, and she faints beneath the burden, thinking it her own weakness. Oh! must he fail? It is but one supreme effort, one great last struggle, and life must-nay, it shall belong enough for that.

He lifts her slowly, and with an agony of pain. Slowly, feebly down the hilly road he staggers on, groping blindly with foot, and hand, and eye, bending and swaying under the light weight of his unconscious burden. At every step the ground appears less steady; with every gasp for breath the air grows heavier; in spite of all his anguish of desire, he must often pause for respite, for relief. Oh, if he dare but loose her for a moment! But no; he knows he never more could raise her!

But yet he struggles on, a pause at every step, a blind, faint grasp at every tree or fence along his path. Still on, his blind, dim gaze fixed on that beacon light before him, which scarcely seems to grow or brighten to his vision. Still on, though pain, and weakness, and despair, and death are claiming him-until he falls across the threshold!

She is saved! And he?

Kind faces bend low over the dying soldier, and tears, such as he never thought to have shed over him, fall fast upon his

Whose is this voice calling him, this hand clasping his? Surely this is the light and rest of Heaven!

Again words, learned long ago, rise to his lips with all the strength of supplica-

" 'Father-I have sinned-forgive-' " 'Forgive thee! Oh, my son! my son!

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GOUT.

This tiresome disease is sometimes looked upon as a penalty for the luxurious living of comparatively modern days; but, as a matter of fact, it has afflicted man from the earliest times.

Not long ago a mummy was unwound in Egypt, which was shown by inscriptions to be the mortal remains of one of the Pharaohs, and the knotted fingers proved incontestably that this monarch—who reigned three thousand years ago—was a victim to gout.

The Romans, we know, from several passages in their literature, were no strangers to its attacks; and in their times, as in ours, it was largely attributed to high living. A curious fact in connection with gout, in the days of the Casars, is that it is said to have then found its victims chiefly among the weaker sex, who nowadays are comparatively free from it.

The writings of Galen, Hippocrates, and other Greek physicians show that gout was as common in ancient Greece as in her great Latin rival. Galen said of it that it was a distemper which none but the gods could cure—an opinion that must be shared by many sufferers who have tried in vain to obtain relief from its twinges.

The doctor who deserves the monument as high as St. Paul's, as wide as the Thames, and as enduring as time—which Dr. Johnson declared awaited him who found a cure for gout—is still to come, for though its attacks may no doubt be modified by regulating the diet and taking abundant exercise, no one has yet been able to prove himself a master of the art of healing this most difficult of the many difficult diseases to which flesh is heir.

The variety of the remedies recommended for a complaint is a sure index of its susceptibility to treatment; and at one time or another, the doctors have professed themselves to be believers in almost every conceivable method for neutralising the effects of this one. It has been attacked with acids and with alkalies, with fire and water; cauterisation having been once the favourite form of remedy for it, as "aqua pura" was in the early days of this century.

Elizabeth's minister, Lord Burleigh, was recommended a cure for an obstinate attack of gout, by the Archbishop of Armagh, which, had it proved as efficacious as it was nasty, should have placed him out of reach of its clutches for the rest of his life. The following was the form it assumed:

"Take two spaniel whelps, two days old, scald them and cause the entrails to be taken out, but wash them not. Take four ounces brimstone, four ounces turpentine, one ounce spermaceti, a handful of nettles, and a quantity of balm, and put all the aforesaid in them, stamped, and serve them up, and roast them, and take the drops and anoint you where your grief is."

Stafford was advised by Laud to treat an attack of gout by running up and down with bare feet on dewy grass. Cardinal Zinzendorff believed that he could obtain relief by bathing his legs daily in pig's blood; and Horace Walpole was gravely advised to try the effect of cutting his nails in hot water.

Dr. Sydenham, the renowned English physician of the seventeenth century, who knew by painful experience what gout was, declares it to be almost the only disease which destroys more rich men than poor men, more men of great intellect than men of ordinary capacity and understanding. He says:

standing. He says:

"Great Kings, Emperors, Generals,
Admirals, and Philosophers, have all died
of gout. Hereby Nature shows her impartiality, since those whom she favours

in one way she afflicts in another.' Gout is, in short, according to this authority, one of the revenges of good fortune and plenty; but however true this may have been in Sydenham's time, the ailment is more democratic now, and shows no such nice distinction of class. Labourers who keep away from the beer-shop are hardly ever attacked by it; but overindulgence in malt liquors is one of the surest passports to gout; and the life of fresh air and exercise, which is, broadly speaking, so antagonistic to this scourge of mankind, is powerless against its ravages unless accompanied by moderate abstinence from this particular beverage. Brain-workers who, though enjoying good health, do not take much exercise, are most subject to gout. It is a curious fact that the poorer Irish, who live to a large extent upon potatoes, are said to be absolutely free from its attacks. Gout is undeniably on the increase in this country; and this fact has been put forward as an evidence of our growing wealth and prosperity. nation must be prosperous to maintain any considerable proportion of its inhabitants in the luxury of gout. There is no country in the world in which gout is so

than the fall of our first parents, and sent down from heaven mercifully to lengthen the lives forfeited by their transgressions. He then proceeds to give six good and sufficient reasons why gout should be hailed as a blessing.

[June 29, 1889.]

Firstly, he says, it gives man pain, without danger. Secondly, that it gives those whom it distinguishes by its favours, intervals in which they may experience to the full the enjoyment of health, that never fall to the lot of those who accomplish their earthly pilgrimage without its companionship. Thirdly, he lauds it as a weather guide, beside which barometers are worthless, and predicts that the day will come when no shipowner will consider his vessel safe unless it is under the command of a gouty captain. Fourthly, he avers that gouty people are free from headache. Fifthly, that they are not subject to fevers. And sixthly, that gout is incurable.

Our gout defender does not go so far as to declare that his pet ailment renders men immortal; but he does say that, if ever any one has had the art of preserving himself or others from the shafts of the great destroyer, his secret has laid in the power of inoculating with gout. The objection that gouty people die, like other lessfavoured mortals, is met by the remark that they are idiots, who know not when they are well off, but must needs attempt to cure the gout which, if left alone, would preserve them.

The heat of the tropics seems to be in some mysterious way antagonistic to this disease, which is far oftener met with in temperate latitudes than near the equator, and which also is more prevalent in autumn and winter than in the warm months of summer.

common as in ours, owing, no doubt, to the largeness of our leisure class, who do little but eat and drink, and endure consequent twinges. It is popularly believed that gout shares with asthma the faculty of lengthening the lives of those whom it favours with its attentions, chiefly because it allows no other disease to dispute its sovereignty. A famous French physician reached the age of a hundred, and for sixty years of his life was subject to gout; and many others, who have attained great age, have been martyrs to it. There is no ailment for which so little sympathy is accorded as for this. The gouty old gentleman is one of the mainstays of the humourist; but few who have not been subject to it realise the dreadful agony that the victim to this disease is called upon to endure.

No doubt the prevalence of gout is to a great extent to be accounted for by the tendency that it has to descend from father to son. Dr. Garrod related that he was once consulted by a patient who told him that his family records showed that every representative of his house had fallen into its clutches for the last four hundred years. No doubt this was an extreme case, for the tendency of gout to "skip a generation" is one of its most widely-recognised attributes. It is supposed that considerably more than half of all cases of gout are hereditary.

Horace Walpole professed himself to be very much hurt at the conduct of gout in selecting him as one of its victims, though his ancestors had been free from it, and he himself had always led an extremely abstemious life.

"If either my father or mother had had it," is his remark, "I should not dislike it so much. I am herald enough to approve of it if descended genealogically; but it is an absolute upstart in me; and what is more provoking, I had trusted to my great abstinence for keeping me from it; but thus it is. If I had any gentleman-like virtue, as patriotism, or loyalty, I might have got something by them; I had nothing but that beggarly virtue, temperance, and she had not interest enough to keep me from a fit of the gout."

A curious little book in honour of the gout was written by one Misaurus, whose object was to show it to be a blessing for which mankind could not be sufficiently thankful. His first task is to set forth the antiquity of his subject, which he does

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

BY MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN. Author of "Geofrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER VI. FACE TO FACE.

Name . Rebecca Fordyce Draycott. Age Thirty-two.

Case of Stabbing. On Remand.

Thus ran the door-card of the cell into which Louis Draycott's wife had been removed. There had not been any reason to keep her still in the cell apportioned to prisoners who are riotous and unruly. by declaring it to be something younger | Sullen, sour, morose, and intractable she

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had shown herself; but those wild outbursts of destructive rage, those wild fits of screaming and abuse, had never recurred since that memorable interview with the Chaplain, the night after her arrival in the prison, two months ago. What magic he had used to exorcise the unruly spirit of revolt that then possessed her, none knew. At the same time, no one wondered; they had seen the same thing happen too often before, to do that.

"He's tamed her, same as he tames the rest," said George, scratching his head and looking as wise as though the whole process were more than familiar to him; "and as to her bein' his lawful wife—which it seems she is, though I can't stomach it myself—that 'ud make it easier, I reckon, for he'd know the weak side of her—wouldn't he, now?"

But the audience—exclusively feminine—to whom George Bramble was holding forth, would not rise to this suggestion. In the first place, they would by no means admit that a woman could have a weak side to her character; still less that it could be taken for granted that her husband should have a knowledge of the fact —even if it were so. So they pursed up their lips and shook their heads, and George felt that his remark had not been a success, by any means.

He, therefore, harked back upon the Chaplain.

"Things may be as things should be," he said, sententiously; "or they may not. All I can say is, I think the Chaplain's got a mortial look; when I seed him coming out of that there good-for-naught's cell, t'other day, I thought I never seed a mortialer—white as death, as the sayin' is; and Miss Johnstone here found the varmint laughin', with her head huddled on her arms, and rocking of herself to and fro, like as if she wur fit to bust."

Miss Johnstone was one of the female warders who had been present at the first interview between the Chaplain and the unruly inhabitant of the "restraint cell." A sense of importance had been upon her ever since; and now, once again had she had "greatness thrust upon her," for had she not seen Rebecca Fordyce Draycott shaking with silent laughter after he had had left the cell, with white lips, strained eyes, and looking altogether, as George so graphically described it, "morrial"?

Miss Johnstone bridled, smoothed down be true, that the Chaplain they all loved

her apron, and set her cap a trifle more forward upon her head.

"I don't wonder the Chaplain was upset-like," she said, "for I happen to know that things have taken a great turn, as you may say."

"Isn't she his wife, after all?" cried they, gathering round, and all speaking at

"Oh, yes; she's his wife, right enough

"Wrong enough, you should say," put in George, interrupting.

"Well," continued Miss Johnstone, "wrong enough, if you like that better; but the party as was stabbed—the girl she stuck the knife into—she's mortal bad—bad as bad—so they say. They've taken her deposition—as I hear—and the trial's put off till they see how things go."

"Why, if she dies, that 'll be — murder!" said George, suppressedly, but greatly excited.

He had a piece of string in his hand, for he had been undoing a parcel for the matron. He jerked it round his neck, drew it tight a moment, and made an atrocious gesture. They all looked at one another.

Miss Johnstone shook her head. On the ground of keeping company with a lawyer's clerk "outside," she set up as being a bit of an authority upon matters of law.

"Well, I don't know about that," she said; "but this I do know—the Chaplain wouldn't like to have it so; be what she may, and stand in the way of whom she may, his tender heart would ache to think of it. I tell you, he'd move heaven and earth to get her off——"

"It's more than I'd do," growled George, from somewhere low down in himself, "if I was him."

"But you ain't, you see," retorted Miss Johnstone, with a jerk of the head, "that's where it lies. You ain't, and you never will be; and no one never will be."

Bessy—who had joined the group—emphatically chimed in with the opinion of the last speaker; and, for the twentieth time, began to tell the story of all the Chaplain's goodness to her and hers "in time of trouble," ending with a hint as to news of such a character as dwarfed all Miss Johnstone's to a mere ripple on the surface of prison life.

Could it be true? they said; could it

so well was about to leave them? What would the prison be like without him? they should like to know. Who would tame the "wild ones;" who would be tender to the "sad ones;" who would heal the broken-hearted; who would help any one through his or her day's work, and make the heavy burden light, when he was gone?

"If this news is true," said Miss Johnstone, who had a slightly injured air, as of one who has been jostled and set aside in the race for social distinction, "it's my opinion as Mr. Draycott is fleeing from

sorrow."

"And what's to become of the pretty one as blessed father so lovely—she as worships the ground our Chaplain treads on—as any one may see with half an eye, let alone wi' two or'nary ones set straight

in 's yed ?"

Over and over again had George told the story of Mazie's visit to old David; and how the Chaplain watched every look of her, "same as a miser might watch his gold," and afterwards the two hung back together, "same as folk 'courting," and looked up at the prison; and the "pretty one" said "summat to Mr. Draycott, and all his face lighted up wi' such a smile as no man never saw wi'out his heart leapin' up into his mouth and flutterin' there fit to choke him."

All this had been talked over, and every detail of it petted and made much of by the women, long since; so surrounding the Chaplain with a halo of romance in the eyes of these simple folk, that he might have been a knight of old, with a lady's colours bound about his arm.

In prison life—that life which is so bound up in itself, and runs so deeply in its dark and narrow bed—a bit of romance like this is a sun-ray gilding the surface of the stream, and touching it to a strange beauty. Quite a tender interest, then, had gathered round Louis Draycott, and the "pretty one" of whom George had told them all; an interest by no means lessened by Bessy's history of how that bright and sweet young lady came to visit her in the days of her hard and bitter sorrow; and how, upon that gentle breast, she had wept the first softening tears that fell from her poor eyes.

"I reckon she'll come to see the sad and sorry ones, ay, and the baddest and boldest of 'em, too, in this here prisin, once she's the Chaplain's wife; and I'd think it nothin' too much to scrope up t'dust wi'

my hand, to mak' a clean place for her to set her little foot upon-that wouldn't I!" George had said, anticipating pleasant days to come, both for the Chaplain and him-"I tell you father was a knowledgeable man, was father—a man of gifts—a man, as the sayin' is, as didn't need to look over a stone wall, but could see through 't; and he saw how things wur betwixt them two-that did he-and blessed 'em most solemn; it wur same as bein' in a church, I'd a mind to look i' the crown o' my hat, and say, Amen, same as we used to do up home of a Sunday, in our village church across the green, and down under the big yew-trees, you know; so I had-

"It must have felt to them almost like — getting married," some listener — a woman, of course—had suggested.

"Well," George had replied, "it were a fore-shadowing, as you may say; and I've seen many a man worse at the parson part of it than father. He wur a man of gifts, wur father."

And now all this sweet romance was

overshadowed and blighted!

"When I think," said George, "of that worthless varmint there, bringing sorrow on that sweet head; bringing tears to them sweet eyes, as looked on father so tender-like—"

But what he felt when he thought on these things was never to be known, for here he stopped short, and all the women of the group faced round, just at the end of the gallery where they stood, each dropping a hurried courtesy, and only preventing themselves from uttering some exclamation or other by main force, as it were; indeed, as they said afterwards, "you might have knocked them down with a feather—any one of them!"

For there, before their eyes, at that unusual and unwonted hour, behold the Governor of the prison, himself in a high state of excitement and military courtesy, escorting the very sweetest young lady they had ever seen, and whom they knew at once to be the heroine of what might well be called the "Prison Romance. Sweet, indeed, she was, to all eyes; but, oh! what a white, set face was hers-how pale-with bright brown hair put back under a little black bonnet, from which a long veil fell down behind, so that she looked almost like a widow! But her eyes were not tearful. No; they were bright as stars, and, as she turned and smiled at Bessy, they seemed to burn with a

fevered and intense light. The Governor walked beside her, hat in hand, watching her with unmistakeable admiration; and she—apparently seeing this—received it, as might some goddess the oblation of an humble devotee.

Behind these two came the matron, herself pale with excitement, and a female warder, who gave the slightest possible toss of her capped head at Miss Johnstone as she passed, as who should say: "Gossiping at the head of the corridor, my dear, I see,

and so you're not in this swim."

When the party reached the door separating the men's from the women's side of the prison, it might have been noticed that Mazie's cheek grew even paler than before; whiter yet when they reached the door of Rebecca's cell. But her self-possession was perfect, and never deserted her. wardress lifted the disc of the spy-hole, to warn the inmate of the approach of visitors, and when the key grated in the lock, Mazie never winced. She stood there, tall and fair in the golden sheen of the August sunlight—a lily among women—her lips a little apart, to let the quickened breath come and go; but with no other sign of the tumult within, visible.

At the very door of the cell she turned a moment, and laid her hand on the Governor's arm, raising pleadingly to his those wondrous eyes, filled with a strange,

unearthly radiance.

Even the simplest woman is conscious of her own weapons, and will use them, either for offence or defence, in time of

need

"You have shown me so much kindness to-day, sir, that I am not afraid to ask still further indulgence at your hands. I would ask to be allowed to see this poor woman—alone."

The Major grew purple to the tips of

It was against all rule, this request of Mazie's; and yet to refuse anything to this lovely woman; to turn a deaf ear to the pleading of that low and gentle voice; to resist the eloquence of those wonderful speaking eyes—was a thing hardly to be expected of any man who had ever held Hor Majesty's commission!

He glanced nervously up and down the corridor. Not a soul was in sight. No one heard the request made, or could hear the answer given, save the two greygowned women, whose eyes were meekly lowered, and whose faces were, for the

nonce, absolutely expressionless.

"Ahem!" said the Governor, feeling the glow of the girl's uplifted eyes upon his face, and noticing how the helpfullooking hands were wrung the one in the other, "it's not our rule, you know, my dear young lady—not quite our rule."

"But, you see, she is not tried yet—she is not a condemned prisoner," put in Mazie, with timid resolution. "Might not that make a difference—that, and my being so very, very wishful to see her alone? You know something of our strange story; you can imagine we must have a great deal to say to each other. I have heard, sir, that you have a daughter of your own—if my sad story were hers, if such sorrow had come upon her as has come upon me, I am sure you would bless those who were good to her, those who helped her, those who—"

But here the sweet voice broke and faltered. Which was perhaps as well, since the Governor was pretty near at his wit's end, blowing his nose violently, and giving other signs of extreme disquietude.

"Bless my soul!" he said, panting, as if he had run a mile in the August sun. "Don't distress yourself like that, my-This is an exceptional casemy dear. quite an exceptional case; and I'm sure our good matron here will understand that she has my permission—in fact, that she can arrange matters to chime in with Bless my soul! I never was so upset by a case since I——dear me! most sad, most sad! I may say that there has never been any one so respected and so beloved as Mr. Draycott. I have never known any one to get such hold of the prisoners, as it were, to be so looked-up to, and to have such an influence—and really, my dear, good young lady, don't, pray don't! I have not deserved such a reward, I haven't, indeed."

For Mazie had taken his little podgy hand in her two soft white ones, and

touched it with her lips,

"I leave you in good hands," he said, making haste to be gone, and pointing to the matron, who still observed the same stolid demeanour as before. "Good-bye, and Heaven bless you. My heart aches for you—it does indeed—and for him, too—for him, too."

The three women were left standing in the grim-looking corridor before the un-

locked, but still closed door.

"The rule is," said the matron, "that during any interview with a prisoner, I should stand inside the door. In this

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case, madam, I shall remain on the seat in the gallery, outside the door. No one else will approach the cell, while you are in it. Will you enter ?"

She motioned to the warder to withdraw, and held the door open for Mazie

to pass in.

"You are very good to me-I am very grateful to you all," said the girl, with a sweet, sad smile on the lips that were now as white as milk, yet did not twitch nor tremble, for all that.

"I shall be within call, madam, in case of need," added the matron, in a low tone.

"I do not fear any need."

"Nor do I."

Another moment, and these two women -the woman who was Louis Draycott's wife, and the woman whom he loved as his own life, and dearer - stood face to face.

For Rebecca has risen from the low, hard bench that is almost the only furniture in the cell, and stands peering, with a sort of insolent curiosity, at the

new-comer.

Since we saw her last, the prisoner has changed much for the better. The enforced quiet and regularity of her life has told upon her; and through the influence of the Chaplain she has been allowed many little comforts in the way of extra diet, and exercise in the corridor and in the yard. Her hair is put back tidily behind her ears; and her face is no longer bloated; her sly, furtive eyes no longer blear and bloodshot. Amid the wreck of all she is, it is easy to note the marks of what she has been, namely, a gentle-woman. In spite of her having drifted into the shoals and quicksands of life, and been cruelly battered in the struggle and the strife, it is plain to be seen, even by the little bow, which she at last bestows upon her unlooked for visitor, from what class she comes.

They might have stood side by side, equals in every way, these two womenthe one who has marred, the other who would fain make, the life of Louis Dray-

Now, it is one of the unfathomable mysteries of prison life that, in utter defiance of all laws as to the silence and isolation of prisoners, anything that goes on in the place is just as well known to every man and woman in it as though the prison were a country town infested by the usual gossips of both sexes. In vain do the authorities endeavour to intersect | shine as white and clean as marble, kneels

this network of secret telegraphy. "Mary Anne" society is more subtle, more sure, or more inscrutable in its machinery.

Of course, all this was a sealed book to Margaret Birt, standing calm and pale before the prisoner, who was "under remand" for stabbing; and it seemed to her the hardest part of her task that she should have to explain who and what she

She begins timidly enough, going, however, straight up to Rebecca and looking her gravely and steadily in the face:

"I am sure you must be wondering who I am - coming to you suddenly - like this?"

The other sits down, folds her arms on the shabby wooden table, and looks up at her visitor warily.

"Not at all. I know who you are quite well; you are the girl Louis was going to

marry."

"Still it may seem strange to you that I

should come here."

"Not a bit. You wanted to see what I was like. People always want to see those who baulk them. Well, I'm not much to look at, am I?"

"I did not come to look at you."

With a low chuckle, the woman begins to rock herself slowly backwards and for-

wards.

"It won't do, you know," she says.
"I'm no fool. I know what you're after, as well as you do yourself—you want to have the crow over me; but "—this with a pitiable revival of a vanity that one might well have supposed long enough dead-"I wasn't so bad-looking once; when I let it loose, my hair would hang to my feet. It's a tousled lot now, I know; but it was good enough then. I tell you, Louis once said he never saw such hair. I hadn't much else to boast of-but I had that,

Woman-like, Rebecca has tipped her little arrow with poison, and now, with narrowed, eager eyes watches to see its

sting. But it glances harmlessly by.
"Did he?" says Mazie, quietly; "I do not wonder at it. I am sure it must have been very pretty-it is pretty still, with that curl in it.'

Again the low laughter; but this time mingled with something like shamefaced-

Then a question on her own part :

"If you didn't come to see what I was like, what did you come for?"

Mazie kneels down on the boards that

close to the table, so that the light from the window, high in the wall, falls full upon her pale, uplifted face—the face that Louis Draycott had once described as "the face of a child with the eyes of a mystic."

Now, as the radiance of those wonderful eyes meets her own, Rebecca cowers a moment, then looks up defiantly. But the defiant spirit cannot live before the gentleness and pity that breathes in every line of Mazie's face. The bold eyes grow almost timid; one might fancy a tremble round the full, coarsened lips.

"I will tell you what I have come for," says Mazie, folding her hands closely together, as is her habit when in any tension of feeling. "I have come to ask you to do something for me—to give me a promise—to take a weight of sorrow off my heart."

She stops a moment, and the other puts

in a word quickly.
"You want me to go away when I get
out of this, and let you marry Louis?"

"How could that be?" replies Mazie.
"How could I marry Louis? You are his wife."

"Well, I've done enough and to spare to give him the chance of getting rid of me. He could put me away if he liked, any day."

That would make no difference to him or to me. You are his wife, and that is what I want to speak about." She pauses a moment, and draws a long, shivering breath, while the hot colour steals into her cheek, and her eyes grow soft and dreamy. "I once read in a story-book that there are some men in the world whom a woman must love, must be ready to give up everything for-not whether she will or she won't, but just because there is no other way. I wondered about this to myself, and thought how strange it would be if I should ever come to love any one like that-I mean with no power to do anything but love him; but I never seemed to understand it one little bit until I met Louis. Then I knew all about it. I had no need to puzzle over it any more."

Rebecca is listening intently, her strange, is no one like him; no one—no one! Let furtive eyes watching every change that us help him; let us both help him all we comes across the beautiful face of the can!"

woman who thus lays bare her own heart, telling the story of her own innermost life; and whose eyes seem to be watching something very far away—something in which that sordid cell, and the prison life that it so well typifies, has neither lot nor part.

"He never seemed very far away from me, even when I did not see him for a whole day, for the memory of little things, of what he said, and how he looked, of how we met, and how we parted, was always with me and about me. Thinking of these things now, when they are all turned to sadness, it came upon me to feel sure that no woman could have married Louis—could have been his wife, without learning to love him dearly. I have found the lesson so easy myself, you see, that I know how easy it must have been to any other."

Heaven knows what memories of long-dead things, of hours of high resolve, of tender impulses, of cravings after better things, rise up in her poor, sin-soiled heart as Rebecca listens. A dewy brightness—strange visitor, indeed!—gathers in the crafty eyes; and slowly, as Mazie tells the story of the love that has been so beautiful and full of hope, and is now so sad, the woman's head droops forward on her arms, and she lies prone and still.

"I thought so," says Mazie, with a faint, flitting smile, and lays her hand tenderly upon the bowed head. "I knew you must have loved him. Your life has been closer to his than mine will ever be. You have pillowed your head upon his breast-as I had hoped to pillow mine—and felt that the heart that beat there was all the world to you; and that you would die rather than wound it by word or deed. There must have been such moments for you - he being what he is—and it is by the memory of that precious past that I pray of you to listen to me now, and grant me what I beg for from you. There is, there must be a bond between us. We have both loved him; let us both spare him all we can; let us both be very tender over him. There is no one like him; no one—no one! Let

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A CASE OF DELUSION. BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

CHAPTER I.

THE Janssens came of a respectable old Dutch family, and claimed, among their ancestors, that famous artist of the same name, who has painted the best picture of the carnal delight of eating and drinking within my knowledge. They had been settled in England for many years, and the present Janssens were half English by blood; but they had certain distinctively Dutch points about them, although there was no strong resemblance between the respective existing members of the family-only three in all-and the elder of the two sisters had inherited her mother's dark eyes and hair.

There was, first, the man of the house, my friend Hendrik, who came half-way between his sisters, Mechtilde and Jacqueline, in age. He was a good-looking fellow, with the pale-blue, limpid, slow-moving, but exceedingly acute eyes of his ancestral race, and something in his gait irresistibly suggestive of skating. He never practised that art to my knowledge; but when we started for one of our long walks, he would throw his head back, fold his rather short arms across his chest-I could not have carried my arms so for two minutesand give a peculiar roll to his ankles. Then I would be reminded of whole galleries of pictures of Dutch people skating

skies, to and from the market-places of their quaint, old, red-roofed towns.

Hendrik was the best of fellows, but taciturn, and remarkably prudent for a young man. He was a photographer by profession, and had already obtained a fair share of success. His sisters lived with him, in the small house at Hampstead, that formed a part of the modest provision which his father — who died when the three children were young-had been able to make for them.

The Janssens were in mourning for their mother when I made their acquaintance, and I dare say her plain black garments aided me to define the impression produced upon me by the elder sister. It was like remembrance. I knew I had never met her previously; but where had I seen somebody strikingly like her?

Presently, when she rose and stood by the open window, placing one of her large, finely-shaped hands on the back of a chair, while she looked straight before her at the shadows on the heath, I found the link of association—it was of Margaret von Eyck that she reminded me. Of Margaret von Eyck in the vast study in which she and her brother painted "The Adoration of the Lamb." Not from her English mother -with the soft-brown Devonshire eyes and the dusky-brown Devonshire hair - had Mechtilde Janssen got her colouring. It was that of the Low Countries-quite a different thing. She was a tall, well-built woman, thirty years old at the time of which I write, a little too much abstracted to be sweet, but with reserves of sweetness as we cheerfully on frozen canals under grey soon learned, with a high, square brow,

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an even, colourless, olive complexion. Her face was full of capacity and endurance. The long, thin, finely-marked lines of the eyebrows, and the fulness of the dark-fringed eyelids were especially noticeable. Her manner was gracious, well-bred, but uninteresting to an habitual observer of manner as I in my capacity of fiction-monger am bound to be: and it conveyed the effect of preoccupation beyond the ordinary cares of a small household and a mode of life which was, at any rate, comfortable and leisurely.

One is tempted, having reached a conclusion respecting anybody, to fancy that one's earliest impressions tended that way. We use the hateful phrase—"I told you so"—as often to ourselves as to other people. I will not yield to the temptation in this instance. When I first saw Mechtilde Janssen the only impression I carried away was that one which I have recorded: her resemblance to Margaret yon Eyck.

It was a good deal later, and after the Janssens had become supremely interesting to me for a personal reason, that I began to be convinced there had been a story in the life of the elder sister, and to wonder what it was. I did not entertain any hope that I should learn, unless, indeed, a contingency—then so remote as to be almost out of common-sense sight—should be realised, and by that means I should come to share the confidences of a family singularly little given to talk of their affairs.

It was impossible not to wish to know whether I was right; very difficult to keep curiosity absolutely out of my demeanour, especially after I had become a constant visitor at the Janssens' house and Hendrik's intimate friend. were quiet people, and the sisters revealed their hereditary proclivities by an unusual attention to domestic affairs. They neither slaved nor fussed; they sacrificed none of their intellectual tastes to housekeeping; but never have I been admitted to a near view of so exquisitely-kept a house as theirs. In it order reigned, without preliminary warfare, and dainty cleanliness reached the height of a fine art, without ostentation, exasperation, or any patient male sufferers being driven to sigh for a little dirt with tranquillity. Tasteful simplicity was the "note" of the house; and self-respect, dignity, sympathy - those things which mere wealth cannot give-were the chief characteristics of its inmater.

It did not take me long to discover whose was the master-mind in all their inventions, devices, and arrangements, the results of which were so satisfactory; and further, that the master-mind was constantly at work for the benefit and the comfort of others, but did little on her own behalf in things external, being full of that story, whatever it might be, of whose existence I had no right to indicate a suspicion.

Mechtilde Janssen was at once the centre of the household system and the life of the lives of her brother and sister, and yet apart from their current and accidents. I remember, when the puzzle and problem of my perception that so it was came to me, there flashed into my mind the recollection of a story I had read in my boyhood, about a woman who had been taken by force out of a convent - in which she had pronounced her vows-and brought into the great world, wherein she played her part; but always with the heart, the spirit, and the isolation of the cloister; and I associated this story with the impression that Hendrik's elder sister produced upon me.

I come now to the third member of the little household — Jacqueline. She was ten years her sister's junior, just twenty when I first knew them, and totally unlike her in personal appearance, save that Take the she, too, was of tall stature. sunny and joyous beauty of one of those glorious Dutch women whom Rubens has made to live for ever on his canvases, divest it of every touch of coarseness, leaving the youth, the health, the strength, the gladness unaltered, invest that figure with the grace that Vandyke gave to the great ladies whom he portrayed, and you will have a notion of Jacqueline Janssen as she was when I saw her first in the springtide, among the tulips and hyacinths in her little conservatory. I prided myself in those days on my powers of observation, and my quick perception of the possibilities of a "subject;" but although her beauty shone on me like sudden sunlight, it did not suggest any notion of that kind. No, no, in a very short time I knew quite well that Hendrik's sister was indeed a fitting heroine for a story; for the story, not of my fancy, but of my life. At first I could only feel "this is the most beautiful girl in the world;" nor has her lovelinesswith which I honestly and manfully confess

I fell in love at once, and offhand, without an instant's troublesome speculation concerning her moral and intellectual endowments-lost its charm for me, now that I have good reason to know how profound was the wisdom of that typical act of folly. The episode in my experience which I am about to relate, has, however, nothing to do with my true love, so I may dismiss that topic in a few words. Its course ran with unusual amoothness, except in the direction of money. I had no income beyond what I made by my pen; and although I had been graciously described in one or two influential journals as a promising writer, I could not venture, until the indicated promise had progressed into performance, to ask a beautiful young girl, who had never experienced a day's real discomfort, or a serious privation in her life, to share so uncertain a lot. I am not going to state how soon it was after I had fallen in love with Jacqueline at first glimpse, that she consented to hold herself engaged to me, and to wait for ever so long. I am sure, for all that, she expected the novel I was then writing to raise me to the zenith of literary fame within a week of its publication. Suffice it to say, we were engaged; we were prepared to wait, and we were happy. So was Hendrik. His disinterested nature came out strongly under these circum-Unlike most brothers whom I have observed, he recognised his sister's beauty, and he did not regard her as a Hendrik might have anticipated a far better match for her than myself; and he was not a romantic person by any means - nevertheless, he was satisfied. My permanent abode was a small flat in an unfashionable quarter of London. Hendrik carried on his business in Oxford Street; it was our custom in fine weather to walk out to Hampstead together after his business hours, and the sisters would sometimes come to meet us. Hampstead wore a glorified aspect in those days, and indeed the place has never become commonplace to me.

I was not certain of Mechtilde's feelings about her sister and myself. We were not very intimate, she and I, and I sometimes fancied that I had not succeeded in concealing from her the curiosity with which she inspired me, and that she silently resented it. She had received the news of my proposal to her sister without the least surprise-Hendrik, man and brother-like,

in contemplation - she had spoken very kindly to me; she had done everything to render my position in the house, in the always awkward character of an accepted lover, as pleasant as possible; she had not objected to my vague prospects, Still, I knew there was something, and after I had said so to Jacqueline, and she had pointed out to me all the particulars of her sister's conduct which I have just stated, I could not pretend to be convinced, but repeated that there certainly was-something! I could not help observing that Mechtilde's clear, olive cheek grew a shade more pale at times, when her dark, solemn eyes rested on her sister's sunny beauty, and that the slow smile which transformed her face when it crossed it, came more rarely. Did she dislike me? Did she distrust me? Was she not sure of Jacqueline's feelings? What was it? The sense of this something disturbed me, and of course I could not refrain from worrying Jacqueline about it; no doubt my vanity was at the bottom of my disquiet.

At last she turned a little pettish, and

said:

"I don't believe there is anything at all; but, if there be, it is only Mechtilde's

dislike of a long engagement."

This explanation made my mind easier, but it somewhat injured my estimate of Mechtilde's good sense. She could not possibly dislike the delay of my marriage with her sister so much as I did; but she was unable, it seemed, to see it in the same light.

A few happy months had fled; I had finished my novel, and confided it to a publisher, and Jacqueline was beginning to count the days until it should be out in all glory of three volumes, red cloth binding, and a title-page of the magical

mystical order.

Many were the projects we formed for employing the brief interval of leisure which I proposed to allow myself, but not one of them was based upon the real requirement in a case of tired brain—entire change of scene and surroundings. When Hendrik pointed this out, and although I received his suggestion with gross ingratitude, I knew he was right.

"My real holidays and yours don't fit in," he said. "I follow the fashion of the swells, you know, and leave town when they do, because they no longer require my clever posing, artistic grouping, and so had not suspected that any such thing was on. I could not say let us make a party

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and go anywhere for more than a couple of days, and so it will end in your mooning about Hampstead a good deal, and taking the girls to crowded exhibitions and hot theatres by way of a thorough rest to your weary brain. I suppose it does take a great deal out of one," he added, thoughtfully, with a queer look at me; for my profession of light literature was as incomprehensible to him as his photographer's art was to me.

We were satisfied with this state of things; neither of us ever attempted to investigate the methods of the other, although Hendrik was free of my writing-room, and I was free of his medicinally smelling premises, with their incongruous properties. I had even once been in a dark chamber, with a great deal of green baize about it, where his incomprehensible slides underwent certain processes, the least mysterious of which he called the bath, and where alarming facilities were afforded for hideously disfiguring one's hands with corrosive fluids.

"It takes just as much out of one, my dear fellow," was my answer, "as any other work, which is the business of a man's life, takes out of him, if he does it honestly. There is a deal of nonsense talked about brain-work; everything is brain-work for the matter of that; and we

all want a holiday after a spell."

Two evenings later, when I went to his studio in Oxford Street to pick up Hendrik for our customary walk out to Hampstead, I found him waiting for me with what for him was impatience and excitement.

"Anything unusual? Anything wrong?"

l asked.

"Something unusual, but not wrong; although you may make it much more right if you will do what I want. Come on; I'll tell you all about it when we get out of the worst of the crowd."

He hurried me along, walking with that odd suggestion of skating in his gait, and presently, turning up a shabby short-cut to which we rarely resorted, he began to

tell me his news.

"You remember Potter," he said, "the man with a craze for craniology? I did all the illustrations for his big book last autumn, and he was greatly pleased with them."

"Certainly. I remember, too, some remarks which he made about my own skull, and that I considered them more learned than polite."

"That's the man," said Hendrik, nodding his round head approvingly. thinks nothing of manners when his favourite theories are in question. man is to him merely a skull with appendages. However, he is a very good fellow for all that, and he came to me to-day to put a good thing in my way. It has come in his rather sadly; however, there is no one's grief in this world but profit is made out of it by somebody. has sent me business before now, though not anything like so good as the present offer. There is a certain great lady-I do not know, and do not want to learn her name-who has an only son to whom she is devotedly attached, and the unfortunate young man, being supposed by his relations and friends to be travelling in remote places among Indians and grizzlies, is in reality hopelessly, but harmlessly insane, and confined in a lunatic asylum in Paris, where he does not bear his own name-I suspect it carries a title. It is a case of delusion, Potter says; the poor fellow is just like himself, and reasonable on all but one point. Of course I did not ask what that point is, nor did I enquire how Potter-who started by telling me that he is in no way related to the lady or her son -comes to be entrusted with so delicate a secret. This, however, he explained by imputing the lady's confidence to her sympathy with his studies in craniology, and her faith in his theories on the subject of madness; these, I suspect, are largely pervaded by his own crank. It appears, besides, that the lady and he are old friends, and that she is so unhappy about the possibility of her son's being badly or erroneously treated that she felt herself constrained to appeal to Potter."

"All this is quite intelligible," I observed; "but how does it apply to

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"I'm coming to that. The poor mother had it all settled with Potter that he and she were to ge to Paris to see the young man, that Potter was to investigate every particular of his treatment, and that she was to remove him if things were not according to Potter's notions, when she was suddenly taken ill. It was a partial stroke of paralysis. She is recovering the use of the affected limb, but a journey is wholly out of the question for a long time, if not for always. With the intensity of the fancy of a sick woman, who is also a rich woman, she has begun to long for a sight of her son as he is now. That he is still

insane she entertains no doubt. He writes to her, and reiterates his delusion every time; but she wants to judge of the treatment he receives by his looks. I think you begin to see it now. She wants a portrait of him, since she cannot go to him, and Potter has told her that no one will make so faithful a likeness for her as the gifted individual who executed the incomparable illustrations for his book. preposterous, and I told him so. are first-rate fellows in my line in Paris; but Potter is obstinate. Potter has promised the lady; Potter offers me a sum that will make it well worth my while to undertake the commission-the affair of three days. I can manage that. He is coming with me to report to the poor mother on the case, and "-here Hendrik stood still to laugh-"the queer old fellow has his own little game, too."

"How? What?"

"I wish you could have seen him standing on his toes, nipping my arm, and peering into my face with his bright little eyes through those spectacles of his, which I believe belonged to his grandfather, while he told me, chuckling, of the astute design he had in his mind. It appears he and the doctor who keeps the lunatic asylum are old acquaintances, and correspond from time to time about their respective fads. From information recently received. Potter believes that the doctor has some rather remarkable skulls in his charge just now, specimens which jumpif you will allow me to use the expression with his ideas of what the skulls in whose inside certain kinds of madness ought to be lodged should be like; and his little game is to get photographs of those skulls. He mentioned with great glee that two of them were closely shaved; and added 'providentially!' I objected that the doctor would hardly like to order patients to sit for their portraits like convicts; but he snapped his eyes a dozen times in sheer exultation as he answered: 'My good scrupulous creature, there never was a madman yet with a skull of the kind I hope to get, who would not have sat for a score of portraits with the greatest alacrity.' It is a strange turn-up, isn't it; but I like the notion somehow. And now about you. I want you to come with us."

"I should not think Mr. Potter would

like that?"

"Potter won't mind.

good in the world. Besides" - here Hendrik looked very serious and peculiarly Dutch - "does not one of your people say the novelist ought to be always on the look out for 'human documents'? should think a lunatic asylum would be a likely place to find some.

After a little more discussion I consented to go with Hendrik to Paris; and no sooner had I done so than the facts he had related, and the possibilities of our projected expedition, took hold of my imagination with great force. The invalid mother, the insane son, whose case was one of delusion, the pretext used to deceive the world, which would be so cheerfully indifferent to the truth, the mad doctor and his possible ways, the whole matter as it was and as it might be, began to assume the sort of interest, of which, no doubt, every writer of fiction has experience. Hendrik, I suppose, was absorbed in it from his own point of view, for we hardly spoke at all during the remainder of our

In the course of the evening we communicated our intentions to the sisters; but without mention of the object of They were not Hendrik's commission. unduly inquisitive; and Jacqueline took a cheerful view of my temporary ab-Mechtilde made no comment upon my part in the matter; but addressed herself to the question of Hendrik's requirements for the journey. As we were to start by the mail train on the next morning but one, I took leave of the I had stayed late; sisters that night. the weather was very fine; the moon was sailing low down in a serene, steel-coloured sky; I should have a pleasant walk for a part of the way into town. Mechtilde and Hendrik stood discreetly at the gate, while Jacqueline accompanied me a little way along the broad path bordering the heath. I turned for a moment to glance backwards in the moonlight, and caught Mechtilde's gaze, seemingly pursuing me with foreboding mistrust. I had ceased to observe her recently; but that last glimpse of her brought back my former fancies. I felt it was not to me her look was directed, but to the raised ghost of that story which I had never read.

CHAPTER II.

THE handsome house in which the pa-I answer for tients of the well-known Dr. Marlot live him; and the little trip will do you all the out their dreary lives, with such alleviations

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of their sad case as advanced science and modern ingenuity have provided, stands in well-kept, and, for the situation, extensive grounds, at Neuilly. The doctor impressed me favourably, although I met him with something of the reluctance which the presence of a gaoler would inspire. He was a short, slight man, with keen, but kind eyes, and a straightforward manner.

Potter and he were old acquaintances; and I thought I could detect in the shrewd Frenchman some lurking amusement with Potter's fad. He was very polite to us all, and personally conducted us over a large portion of the establishment. It was easy to see that the doctor's patients belonged to the wealthy classes only. The appointments of the house were luxurious; and we saw several of the patients out in the grounds who were, no doubt, under strict surveillance, but nothing of the kind was apparent.

Among my studies from life a visit to a lunatic asylum had not until now been included, and I was immediately struck—as I suppose every one is on seeing that sad sight for the first time-by the isolation expressed in each face. Of the well-dressed, quiet gentlemen, of whom we saw, perhaps, a dozen, each one looked and moved as though he alone existed in that scene, and as though the doctor's grounds, with their graceful trees, flowering shrubs, smooth, winding walks, and gay parterres, were Sahara itself. The weather was warm, and the patients carried their hats in their hands in most cases, to the huge satisfaction of Potter, whose stealthy glances at the skulls-I am sure he was longing to handle them-made him look much more mad than any one whom we saw.

Dr. Marlot informed us that Mr. Clement Winthrop had been apprised of his mother's wish and our expected arrival, and that he had taken kindly to the humouring of her fancy.

Hendrik had borrowed the heavy portion of his apparatus from a friend in his own profession, who practised it with the assistance of Paris sunshine, and at once set to work at his incomprehensible preparations in a favourable position on the smooth lawn. The appearance of the camera and its appendages—I may mention here that I was supposed to have come with Hendrik in the apocryphal character of his assistant—had aroused the attention of some of the least preoccupied of the poor gentlemen in the grounds, and the doctor had skilfully contrived that

among those who came up to the spot we occupied, and looked on with a fitful curiosity, the two skulls so coveted by Potter should be included.

I was too new to such sights to be capable of deriving amusement from anything inside the walls of a prison for the separated ones; but I was aware that Potter's demeanour was very funny, and that the doctor's method of suggesting to the skulls to have themselves photographed, while Hendrik was waiting for his ostensible sitter, was admirable. I don't know what were the different forms taken by the insanity of the two gentlemen; beyond the almost invariable leaden complexion and haggard eyes they were not remarkable in appearance; but I saw at once that Potter had been right about the personal vanity which may be generally looked The skulls were for in the insane. middle aged, and could hardly have been well-looking at any time; but if they had been professional beauties, or savages of distinction, they could not have displayed greater eagerness to have their portraits taken, or a more punctilious jealousy about precedence under the operation.

Potter stood on his toes, nipped my arm, and hailed the doctor's decision on the latter nice point with innumerable flickers of his eyelids. Hendrik was operating on the second skull when Mr. Clement Winthrop joined the group on the lawn. The others were intent upon the camera; but I had turned away, and was looking towards the house, so that I saw him approaching, and instantly discerned that his gait, his face, and his entire deportment were unlike those of He did not walk the other patients. briskly; but he walked with a purpose. There was not about him that inde-scribable something which I had always felt in the aspect of one mentally afflicted, even in the most harmless way, with a painful thrill of the nerves, and an involuntary shrinking. Presently he was shaking hands with Potter, and afterwards with myself; and then we three stood together, waiting for the emergence of Hendrik from under the stifling black veil. The sitting of the second skull was over; and while the subsequent mysteries were being enacted with the slides, I observed the man whose fate fillled me with a profound and also puzzled pity, and I saw that he glanced occasionally at me with curiosity. In those looks there was neither furtiveness nor

vagueness, and I had caught but few of them before I said to myself: "This man is not mad." Let me try to place him before you, as I saw him only a few minutes before I was convinced of my egregious error. His age was about thirtyfive; his stature tall; he held himself with the ease and grace of an Englishman accustomed to good society; the pose of his well-shaped head was remarkably fine; his face was not handsome, but distinguished-looking; his hair and eyes were dark. He had one little trick of manner; but it would hardly have attracted any attention less concentrated than mine. This was an occasional twitch of the head, as though he were shaking off a fly, and a quick, upward glance. His figure, wellknit and muscular, suggested unusual strength; but there was no coarseness or heaviness about it. The expression of his face was profoundly sad, yet it had not the vague and maundering wretchedness of the melancholy maniac. was not that of a man with whom one might not unreasonably reason. moment my interest in Mr. Winthrop Hendrik had been right; here was a human document worth the perusal. I had thought more of the mother than of the son, in the story he had told me; but now, looking at the man, with the impression that he was not mad growing rapidly into a conviction, I felt sure he was not kept in this place against his will. That is a point on which one can no more be mistaken in the case of a madman than in the case of a prisoner. Little as I know of the former as a class, I knew so much as this; they all want to Now, if Winthrop were not mad, and yet remained in a lunatic asylum with his own consent, what did it mean? At this point I pulled up my imagination, but not without a great desire to learn the real story of the man's detention.

"The weather is changing," said Dr. Marlot, while Hendrik was still busy with his slides, and the result of his operation on the second skull was still uncertain. "I am afraid we shall have a storm."

As he spoke we heard a thunder-growl. A storm we had, in a few minutes, of the genuine Paris kind, and the camera had to be smothered up in tarpaulin, and Mr. Winthrop's sitting postponed until after This vexatious occurrence brought about the fulfilment of my wish, and also dispelled my foolish notion that Mr. Winthrop was sane.

A broad verandah with a glass roof, supported by iron pillars covered with creeping plants, was one of the pleasant features of Dr. Marlot's house, and after luncheon we adjourned thither, to smoke cigars, and watch the dispersal of the storm. I was standing apart from the others when Winthrop came up to me and said:

"Will you walk here for a while with me, Mr. Carleton? You have observed me closely; you know I am not mad, as well as I know it. I should like to tell you the truth about myself, because you are the only person who will listen to my story without a previously-formed conviction that it is the creation of a mad-

man's fancy."

He spoke with supreme calmness and ease, twitched his head, glanced upwards in the way I had already noticed, and waited for my reply. I looked towards the ever-watchful doctor; he gave me a slight nod of assent, and I at once turned away from the direction of the others and walked by the side of Winthrop to the end of the verandah. I did not speak; his reading of my thoughts, and his intention, as I supposed, to make an appeal to me of some kind, had surprised me out of the power of words. I was driven by this surprising incident to abandon the belief that he was a voluntarily-incarcerated patient of Dr. Marlot's. He set a chair for me, but placed himself with his back against the inner side of the nearest pillar, and, after another twitch and glance, he began to speak, with his eyes directed to my face-very unlike a madman, that, I thought — and his hands loosely clasped in front of him.

"The truth about myself, Mr. Carleton, is that I am sane now, and that I have never been insane, except on the occasion when I committed the act for which I have to work out a life sentence. I dare say you have been told that I am a harmless lunatic-that mine is a case of

delusion?"

"I have been told nothing, Mr. Win-

throp."

"I will shorten my narrative by putting it as Dr. Marlot would put it, if he were giving you an account of my case. He regards it with great interest. The doctor is a good fellow, a gentleman, and very well read for a specialist. I should find him an agreeable companion, if I could ever get rid of that other one who is so constantly with me that I cannot give my thoughts to anything else, except by a strong effort."

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Here his face darkened strangely, and again I saw the twitch and the glance.

"Dr. Marlot would tell you that, five years ago, I, being then thirty years old, in sound health, and possessed of unusual strength and activity, suddenly fell into a state of dementia, accused myself of murder, and insisted on every sort of effort being made to trace the identity of the man whom I believed myself to have murdered, and who was a total stranger to me; that he-Dr. Marlot-was consulted, and pronounced it a pure case of delusion, on all the grounds of science and also of evidence; that I, finding it useless to urge the truth upon persons who were rooted in their own view, and feeling that I was bound to expiate a crime which I knew I had committed, no matter how proofless it remained; and also fearing that I might again be attacked by the momentary mania which had led to it, and that another life might be sacrificed to my own terrible misfortune, and the obstinate incredulity of my friends—this is how he would put my explanation of my case to him, you understand-had willingly given myself into his charge. Finally, all the formalities were complied with, and that I have been in his asylum ever since, a victim to melancholia, and, to the best of his belief, a hopeless case. Do you see it now, Mr. Carleton ? "

Never in my life had I found a question so difficult to answer, or a look so difficult to evade. His irrational statement was set forth with a lucid reasonableness which made me feel as if I were going distracted. He resumed with some trouble in his

voice:

"Ah, you do not answer! You are not so sure that I am not a madman as you were just now, and you are not clear about my motive for telling you the truth and earnestly desiring you should believe it. But I can explain this easily, if you will only try to put yourself in my place, and take those bare facts into your mind. Five years ago I was in France, making a walking tour through the Pas de Calais, and one evening, at nearly dark, when I was approaching Boulognesur-Mer-my destination for the time-by way of the sea coast, and had almost reached the fishing village of Portel, a great storm that had been brewing came on. I knew the fishing boats were out; the sea had been rough all day, and was now coming in with great thundering waves, the tide being nearly full. amends I could for my act of insane

I liked to witness the strife of wind and sea; but there suddenly arose a strange hurry in my brain with the whirl and the noise, and I rushed along the edge of the falaise at the top of my speed. There is a steep ascent from the coast by the face of a sand-hill, at a little distance from the village, and just as I was hurrying to the spot at which the crooked path is reached from the level, a man came hurrying up to the top and, with a wild gesture, tried to stop me, uttering Afterwards I some incoherent words. understood that he meant to warn me of the danger of the descent - a great cantle of the sand-hill having broken away, twenty feet above the sand and shingle. I suppose he had barely escaped with his life. But the hurry in my brain was whirling and roaring like the winds and waves. I cursed him, struck at him with the loaded head of the heavy stick I carried, and rushed on, still along the falaise, knowing only that he had fallen backwards, and not thinking of him, not thinking of anything except the hurry in my brain,"

How steadily he told his story; with what an air of consistency, mad as it was ! His face was ill to see, and the twitch and

upward glance were frequent.

"You see, Mr. Carleton," he went on, "if I were a madman I could hardly give you so accurate an account of my mental condition. I have not forgotten one sensation of that night—between the time when the storm began to worry me, and the time when I lay down to sleep with my knapsack under my head, in a little thicket, and felt that I must sleep though all the world were

being blown to the four winds.

"It was day when I awoke, and remembered, with horror, all about it. There was no hurry in my brain now; there was no fever in my blood; my natural caution had returned to me. I got up and walked back to the off-side of Portel. All along the way I could mark the signs of an extraordinarily high tide; and all along the way I wondered how it was with the man whom I had struck. I supposed he was some one belonging to the village or its neighbourhood. I had no distinct idea of his person. Ignorant as I was of the dangerous rent in the sand-hill, I hoped he had fallen on a ledge of the path and picked himself up, or that he had been picked up and taken care of in the village. Of course I must find him, and make what

violence. I came to the spot, and once more there was a hurry in my brain; but it did not master me, I mastered it, and with it my loathing reluctance to look over the edge of the sand-hill, lest by any chance he should be lying in the path, maimed by my blow. I looked over; he was not there; but I saw the jagged edge a few feet below, where the rent had been made, and the path destroyed. I saw great masses of earth and sand scattered on the shingle beneath, and heavy drifts of seaweed washed up among them. The tide had come leaping up into the very space left by the rent in the sand-hill. If the man had fallen over the edge he must have been killed by the fall, or carried out by the retreating waves; certain death either way. Who was the man? That, Mr. Carleton, I have never known. remained in the neighbourhood for some time, but no intelligence reached me; there was no word of any one being missed from the village or the district. I got all the newspapers containing intelligence of the department; but there was not an advertisement, not a notice of any disappearance. I went away, and returned again to the neighbourhood, still there was no sign; there has never been any sign. Somewhere in the world-it may be near to me or far from me-there are people who have been condemned by my act to the agony of suspense - the agony of utter ignorance respecting the fate of one beloved. Whomsoever the man may have been, somebody loved him, somebody wanted him, somebody waited for him at home."

The acute misery in his voice touched me to the soul. My fancy was highly strung up by this time; more than fancy

was aroused now.

"The story is true," I said to myself; "the man is not mad." And the man knew that I had said this to myself, and

replied to it.

"Once more, Mr. Carleton, you are I am glad to see that I have convinced you, because I may now hope to get help. But first, you must learn why I have been helpless. My mother became alarmed by my long absence, and the tone of my rare letters. I had sunk into great despondency; an entire change had passed over me. I would not go to her; she came to me, without giving me any notice; and under the influence of her astonishment and grief

the simple truth as I have told it to you to-day."

"And she refused to believe your state-

ment?" "Absolutely. Among those things which I can never forget, is the betrayal by my mother's face of her first terrible suspicion that I was mad! Her looks, her shrinking, cowering agony might almost have made me so. She consulted her friends, especially Potter, and I let her think I did not know; she got doctors to see me, as though by chance, and I fell in with the pretence. I think they were un-certain for a while, for very close enquiries were made into the possibility of my statement being true. But it was never confirmed in any particular; and when "his face darkened still more, and his voice changed-"when I was enabled to clear up a portion of the mystery, or, at least, to save them from wasting enquiry in a useless direction, when I could tell them that the man I had killed was not a fisherman or a peasant, but a gentleman, then they resolutely refused to entertain the matter at all. I was pronounced insane; and my poor mother, acting under the advice of her relatives-I have none on my father's side, and am her only son-consigned me to the care of Dr. Marlo, of whom I have not to complain in any respect. Observe, Mr. Carleton, I freely consented. The only difference between my mother and myself is the reason for my seclusion. She holds my case to be one of delusion; I know it to be one of homicidal mania, and that sane as I have been ever since that one outbreak-sane, and sad as sane, Heaven is witness—I am not a man to be entrusted with liberty! Now, you have heard me, Mr. Carleton, will you help me?"

Of course, he had told me the truth. Of course, he was now perfectly sane. A sudden outbreak of homicidal mania was not so very rare a phenomenon; this was a clear case of it. I was convinced, and I would do what he asked, provided I should be assured on good authority that the revelation of the truth, and the discovery of the dead man's identity, would not involve penalties to Winthrop. was clearly best to assent unconditionally

at present; so I assented.

"I will help you, Mr. Winthrop," I said.

"But how am I to do so?"

"Prosecute the enquiry for me. You are a journalist and a novelist; make the facts known; you shall have the exact on seeing the change in me, I told her date, and as close a description of the

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face of the man I killed, as I can give you in words. I am no artist, or I might draw his portrait for you with unerring fidelity."

The tone in which he uttered these extraordinary words—a complete contradiction of one of his former statements—sent a thrill through my nerves.

"I don't altogether understand you," I said. "You told me, in the course of your narrative, that you had no distinct idea of the man at the time of the occurrence. You did not see him dead; how then can you describe his face?"

He moved a step nearer to me, laid his hand on my arm, looked straight into my eyes, and made me this awful answer:

"Because a face looks over my shoulder all day long; and in the night, when I wake, I know it is there. What face can it be, but his? And it was when I told my mother that this had come to me, to help me to expiate my crime against the living; it was when I would have had the face described in advertisements, that she refused to believe my story, and they all agreed that I was mad, that it was a case of delusion. Delusion! Mr. Carleton, the face is looking over my shoulder now; it is looking into your eyes; its own are following the changes of your countenance." He had glanced up several times while he spoke, and the action gave terrible reality to this ghastly fancy of his. "It is the face of a young man, a happy, hopeful, handsome young man! It has dark eyes, crispcurling, dark brown hair, and a smiling mouth; the smile is like a lover's-sweet, musing, and full of memory. And this was he whom I killed !"

Mad! Mad! Mad! I had never seen Winthrop until that day; he was, in the ordinary parlance of the world, nothing to me; but the now overwhelming conviction of his insanity, and the terrible perception of his suffering, caused me acute pain.

of his suffering, caused me acute pain.

"Now, Mr. Winthrop, if you please, all is ready," said a clear, pleasant voice close to us, and Dr. Marlot came up, smiling, but darting a keen look at me. "The light is all it should be, Mr. Janssen tells me, and he is waiting for you."

Winthrop said nothing, but he stepped out from the veraudah, and walked briskly towards the group assembled on the lawn.

"I am afraid he has disturbed and distressed you, Mr. Carleton," said the doctor, courteously; "but I thought it better to as usual, and got an impression—

let him have it out with you, for I could see that you were puzzled, as any one without special experience in mental disease might naturally be. Mr. Winthrop's is one of the most curious cases of delusion I have ever known."

"Such an awful one! So ghastly, so haunting, so inseparable from himself! The wonder is that it has not driven him to suicide long ago."

The doctor looked very grave, but did not take up my remark.

"This notion of his, that his imaginary crime might be repeated if he were free from restraint, is no doubt well-founded, and its leading to his voluntary submission to detention is very fortunate."

"Most fortunate. Shall we join the others?"

It was weak on my part, but I did not feel able to do so. I shrank from seeing Winthrop again, and longed to get out of the house. I therefore pleaded a forgotten engagement, asked the doctor to tell Hendrik, for me, that he would find me at the Hôtel du Louvre at seven o'clock, and took my leave. I walked from Neuilly to the hotel, feeling myself under a strong necessity for tiring myself out, went to my room-one at a pleasant height above the restless, noisy street-placed myself in an arm-chair in front of the window, which I threw open, and fell asleep—as I had done more than once, on reaching a satisfactory crisis in a novel, or bringing a story to The perusal of this a happy conclusion. particular human document had taken a great deal out of me.

I was awakened by the opening of the door, and looked up.

"Hendrik! My dear fellow, what is the matter?"

He took a seat before replying, and then spoke with extreme gravity.

"Something very strange, and inexplicable, I hardly know how to tell it to you best. You are aware of the nature of that poor young man's delusion? Marlot told me about it while Winthrop was talking to you. It appears that it was supposed possible there might be some truth in the strange story he told when his insanity revealed itself; but the delusion of the face looking over his shoulder disposed of all that. A horrible idea, is it not? I wished I had not heard it, at least until after I had done my work, it gave me such an uncanny feeling; and yet it was well I had heard it. I got to work,

he paused; I bade him, impatiently,

"Lucius," said he, "when I looked at it, Winthrop's was not the only face on the plate. There was another-looking over his shoulder."

I gasped out something.
"Yes, there it was, the face — the delusion of the poor fellow, which is no delusion at all - the proof of the truth of his story, the evidence that here is a sane, but haunted, man shut up from the world. Don't imagine that I am mad, you shall see it for yourself, to-morrow."

I need not repeat what we said to each other about this occurrence. our speculations were vain; but we indulged in many, nevertheless. Hendrik recovered composure on the amazing matter sooner than I did. He was satisfied to admit that, in the present state of our I to tell her?" knowledge, it was impossible to account for the presentation of a phantom of the imagination by a sun-picture; but he had no doubt science would supply an explanation in time. He had, however, more to tell me.

"Lucius," he began again, "not only is

the face there; but I know it."

"You know it ? Whose face is it?" "It is the face of Robert Trenchard, whom I believe to have been killed, in a sudden fit of madness, by the man who, in Marlot's mad-house, is called Winthrop; and Mechtilde has mourned him for five years, in utter ignorance of his fate."

"Mechtilde! Was he then-

"They were lovers; but not actually engaged. Trenchard was an American; he was visiting England when I fell in with him, and we grew intimate. soon saw how it was with him and my sister, and I spoke to him. He was a reserved fellow, and I knew little or nothing of his affairs. I never learned more than that his parents lived in New York; if I had a notion that his father was a very wealthy man, it was only a notion. It was agreed that he should return to his own country, to make such arrangements as he thought fit - I did not enquire into them-and come back to my sister as a suitor of honour should, if he could bring us an assurance of her being welcome in his family in a strange With this understanding they parted. He had to go to France on some business, and meant to take a French steamer for New York. Mechtilde had deferred to my wish that she should not

write to him until he had written to her: but, from the hour of their parting to the present, she has never heard from or of him. Robert Trenchard vanished utterly out of our knowledge. I cannot tell you what she suffered from hope deferred, from suspense, from the misery of ignorance and dread. All that is over now, of course, and she has outlived it; but it has left an indelible mark upon her, and also made her morbidly anxious and distrustful of the future for Jacqueline. It is two years since Trenchard's name has been uttered in our The last time was when she house. begged me to let it be unheard henceforth, and then she said: 'I am sure he is dead, and I am at rest in that security. He has not been faithless.' Lucius, the face on the plate is Trenchard's; how am

"I do not know. Take time over it; tell her in your own time and your own way that you have certain knowledge of his death; but do not tell her more. Leave her to what peace she has acquired. I think you will find that she will be consoled still, as heretofore, by her belief that

he was not faithless."

And so, I had been right; Mechtilde

Janssen was a woman with a story.

I saw the plate on the following day, and the face was there, looking over Winthrop's shoulder; but, fortunately, not touching it, so that Hendrik was able to expunge it without injury to the figure of his sitter. The likeness was an admirable Winthrop's mother — whose name Hendrik never disclosed, although, I presume, he learned it-was much pleased, and sent him a message of warm thanks. A few months later Potter called on Hendrik-who had told me that he had communicated to his sister the fact that Trenchard's death was ascertained beyond a doubt-and gave him news of Winthrop. The poor fellow's health had begun to fail rapidly, apparently without cause, and he was not likely to see another Spring; but he was much less melancholy.

"He sticks to his imaginary murder still, with all the obstinacy of a lunatic," Potter said, in conclusion; "but there is one great improvement in his state the face no longer looks over his shoulder, and he is convinced this is because some imaginary person, who cared for the visionary victim of his uncommitted crime, has been put out of sus-

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pense. An extraordinary case of delusion, my dear Janssen. Nothing about the skull to account for it. A most extraordinary case!"

MATHILDE.

By MRS. R. S. DE C. LAFFAN.

CHAPTER I.

Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords with might.

THE air was warm with sunshine, and sweet with the lilting of birds; the sea was faintly purple, and so transparent that in its depths you could see the little round white pebbles, and watch them turn gently to and fro with the sway of the water that lapped against the lichen-covered These rocks, a little further from the sea margin, were carpeted with all lowcreeping plants; here and there this tender herbage jewelled with stars of blue, and red, and gold, tiny blossoms among the greenery, each perfect in form, and vivid in colour, though so small. One pale pink flower, with long slender stems, had grown bolder than its fellows, and laid one of its cluster of rosy bells upon the gently stirring bosom of the water, as trustfully as a child might lay its head upon the mother's breast to be rocked to sleep.

The bay which washed this flower-pied shore was formed by a deep inlet of the Guernsey coast, and now lay sparkling in the sunshine, as though its surface were strewn with countless diamonds. Yet, beautiful as it was, it lacked something in the eyes of the girl who watched it. Anxious eyes were hers too just now, brown and soft as those of a spaniel, and arched by delicately traced brows of the same deep russet shade as the rippled hair that crowned the broad low forehead like a natural diadem; eyes that had a golden sparkle in their depths, and promised to be able to glint and laugh in merry moments happily enough. Her figure was tall and slender, yet womanly enough in the round-ness of its curves, and her simple gown of light grey cotton fitted it faultlessly. Her hat hung upon her arm by its poppycoloured ribbon; one hand, sun-browned yet slender, shaded her eyes from the glare above, that she might the better gaze across the shimmering waters of the bay. Behind her, away from the waterside, stretched a fine spread of Lenten lilies, nodding their yellow heads, and Sissy sit down like that on the shallow

making a sunshine of their own below, in rivalry of the glow overhead.

Out from this golden garden presently rushed a little maid, all red and breathless from chasing a butterfly. No fear that little Alice wanted to catch it, and pull the tiny feathers from its pretty wings. dear, no! Sister Mattie had taught her better things than that; but there could be no harm in running a race with the butterfly, just to see whether fluttering wings or flitting feet should have the best of it. Alice tried to be very careful not to tread upon the daffodils, and to keep on the grass; but, sad to relate, here and there a golden head lay low, and she had to go back and gather them up in her pinafore, wishing to make amends by taking them home and putting them in Grannie's yellow dish, by the window of the cottage that looked out upon the sea. She was sorry she had broken their straight green stems, and a very serious little face looked up at Sister Mattie from the depths of a big white sun-bonnet, and a troubled little voice began the story of the race with the butterfly.

But little Alice, the slain daffodils wrapped in her pinafore and hugged to her breast, chattered to Sister Mattie, and, for once, found an unheeding listener.

The little maid waxed wroth. "You do be looking, looking over the sea, Mattie, and you don't be listening to Pet talking-

"Pet is always talking."

"And Mattie is always looking over the sea."

Pet gazed seawards, too, as she spoke; then she looked at Mattie, gently pulled at the sleeve of the grey cotton gown, and asked a question on her own account.

"Does 'oo think, Mattie dear, the nice gentleman will come to-day in his ickle boat ? "

"It is nothing to us, Pet, whether he comes or not," said Mattie, severely, gathering a poppy, without the least idea how well it matched the tint of her own cheek at the moment. "Now, come here, and we will tell about the tiny brown elf who lived-

But Alice was not to be drifted from her vantage ground.

"What for, then, did you be looking for him, Sissy dear?"

In her baby creed, to look for a thing you did not want to find was a silly waste of time. It was nice to have bank that was all moss and flowers; nice to be cuddled up and told about the brown elves. But was Sissy angry that she looked so red, and how could one listen even to the story of the elf, with a little dark speck out there on the bright water, coming nearer and nearer, and getting bigger and bigger every moment?

Yes, there it was—no longer a speck upon the water, but clearly defined enough—a little boat; its two sculls, like the fins of a great fish, cutting the water on either side.

Those sculls were skilfully wielded; indeed, the owner of this canoe had once in his life already been the envied winner of the "Diamonds," skimming the water in his tiny craft, as lightly and easily as a water-beetle, and with as little apparent effort, amid the cheers and plaudits of the lookers on. Now Major Clement Annesley had found a jewel, set in that garden of the sea, that island of flowers, called Guernsey; a jewel that seemed to him a prize more precious, more worth the winning than diamond sculls, or gems galore either of fame or gain.

He had been spending a month with his friend the officer commanding the regiment of the line, lying at The Lines barracks, and, truth to tell, now the month was at an end, he looked back with fond regret alike to sunny days and moonlit nights. Major Annesley had come to Guernsey to recruit. He had been on a shooting expedition to Catania, returning home to Eugland only to sicken for a low fever, the result of malaria. The balance between life and death had, in fact, been rather nicely adjusted, and those about him had felt some uncertainty as to which scale would kick the beam.

Clement Annesley fought through the crisis of the fever, turned the corner, and came back to the world, rather thin and shadowy, not much like the man so well known for his athletic prowess, perhaps, but still with calm pulses and a clear head, two things that had failed him sadly since the weary night when he—what he called—"caved in," and lay moaning and halfunconscious on his bed, with a vague idea, at intervals, that certain troubles he had had to fight with were coming to an end, and that he was floating—floating away upon the waves of an eternal sea to where "beyond those voices there is peace."

After all he had to return from that dreamy border-land—not very gladly, yet with a certain pleasure and content in the

sights and sounds of everyday life that we all feel on recovering from sickness. Then his old friend, the commanding-officer of the regiment, quartered in Guernsey, wrote and begged of him to come and revel in Channel Island sunshine and fresh air, "lazy" round the bays in his boat, and generally please himself and get strong.

"This is the most healthy place in the world," wrote the Colonel, "and our fellows will be delighted to have you amongst them. The wife and I live in a charming little nest of a place, called Bertozerie, a house smothered in flowers, and with the jolliest smoking-room in the world. Hurry up, old fellow, and come along."

So Clement Annesley hurried up, and came along, and never did man gain health and strength so rapidly as he did in that island of flowers. He was in the humour to see the best of everything. He had left his troubles behind him for the moment. He was with the best and kindest of friends. The weather was simply glorious; at least, a month ahead of England, so that it was, as he said to the Colonel's charming wife, "like stepping into summer."

The Major, in his Canadian canoe, soon became a familiar enough figure to the simple inhabitants of the fishing village on the other side of the island from where town and barracks lay, for he skirted the bays and inlets and soon grew to know the coast off by heart. He had such bright, courteous ways with him, this man with the square-set shoulders, tawny locks, and grave-looking blue eyes; he won his way so easily into the citadel of any woman's heart, from old Grannie Lamotte, sitting in the sun beside her old man, Gregoire, mending nets, to the sweet, wee maid, Alice, who, from that pent-house, her sunbonnet, made coquettish eyes at sight of him, and with one finger in her rosy mouth, and head on one side, courted a kiss as plainly as any daughter of Eve well could.

As to Mathilde, old Grannie's orphan grandchild, she said little enough, though she listened eagerly enough when others spoke of him. She kept silence when others spoke; but day by day the story that none around her suspected, was written upon the tablets of that heart, a record that time could not erase. Above her simple surroundings in the matter of intellectual culture, she was one of those women whose minds are unto them a kingdom, and having made the best of any

her hand.

smallest opportunity given to her, Mathilde Lamotte found in the companionship of such a man as Clement Annesley the very atmosphere in which heart and intellect could alike expand. Nor is "companionship" too strong a word to use in describing the state of matters between these two. first by accident, later by unacknowledged design, Clement met the girl with the golden-brown eyes in that flowery nook at the head of the deep inlet where we have seen her watching for his coming. Their talk was of all things under heaven. He brought her books, which she read with eyes and heart alike, partly for their own sake, partly for the giver's; read by the one slender candle allowed by Grannie, until the small, simple, maidenly chamber that looked sheer down the white cliff into the sea, grew to be a sort of fairy-land peopled with creatures of the imagination, peopled also with sweet and precious memories of

She had been very happy, this guileless, dreaming girl: had been sad at times with a sense of her own unfitness to be the wife of a fine gentleman like Major Annesley, and then had blushed and sobbed for gladness to think that if he thought her fit, then must she be fit indeed; and what mattered the whole world, if it came to that?

the day that was passed; of tones and looks, and, now and again, the touch of a

hand upon her shoulder, once of lips upon

But of late, just since the few last times of their meeting, a shadow had come over Mattie: a shadow to which she could hardly put a name, and yet which made itself felt. Something regretful in the passion-laden blue eyes: some new wistfulness in the smile with which he bade her farewell. She could not understand these things; but they reacted upon herself and made her feel night and day like one who listens to a plaintive strain of music and is saturated with its faint, sweet melody.

But we are keeping the little boat too long on its shoreward way, and Clement Annesley from the side of the woman he loves.

For it had come to that. This was no mere fancy, no mere admiration for a woman's beauty that now swayed his life; colouring every thought and every impulse. As the fragile craft touched the mossy margin of the bay, he sprang on shore, made fast the boat to a convenient stake, and then made his way, bare-headed -his little gay-coloured boating cap in his hand—to where Mattie and Alice waited always seemed to be wandering in fairy-

-the former, silent, pale, trembling; the latter, riotous and jubilant, as became her years and state.

"I be's welly glad 'oo does be come," she cried, rushing forward, while the poor daffodils fell to the ground. "Sissy has been looking for 'oo ever so. She couldn't hear Pet talking."

"Pet talks so much," he said, catching her up in his arms and tossing her aloft: a glow upon his sunburnt cheek, a joyous gleam in his blue eyes at the picture called up by her simple words.

Then he clasped Mattie's hand a moment, stinting himself of the joy of looking in her troubled face until that trouble should have passed.

But even then Mathilde seemed to be dumb, and her hands trembled so that she had to press them the one in the other. Have we not all gone through that strange phase of feeling-all felt that subtle sense of coming sorrow that no words can describe, and that yet is so real a thing? There was nothing that she knew of to make this coming of Clement Annesley's different to the many that had gone before, and yet the heart within her beat low, and the lips were pale that gave him such gentle greeting.

Pet loved to hear herself talk, and loved other people to listen to her, so she chattered away for a bit to these two as they strolled on side by side towards the shade of the woods which, a little further on, stretched down almost to the water's edge. Gradually, however, it dawned upon Pet that no one was paying the slightest attention to her. At this she pouted; then caught sight of a radiant blue dragonfly skimming over the flowers with short, ecstatic flittings and stoppings, and lured by this attraction, the big sun-bonnet wandered away among the flags and grasses, until it became a mere white speck among the green, and then two tired little legs betook themselves home to "the cottage by the sea."

So these two-lovers in all but namewere left in the sweet-scented solitude of the summer woods, where the sunshine filtered down through a weft of branches, and birds chirped softly as though the shadowy light sebered them At firston either side-words were few. Clement's eyes was that sort of look that seems to say, "So I have found you!" a look than which there is none sweeter to a woman. As for Mattie, she

land, where her feet kept pace with those of Clement Annesley. As she listened to his voice, such glamour came over her, that all her fears and difficulties as to the difference of his position in the world and her own died away—or went somewhere out of sight—and there was nothing but content and joy, nothing but wonder and amaze at her own happiness, in and around her. Now and again she sighed but not with sorrow, rather with a joy that almost verged on pain.

"There is no climate in the world like that of this island of yours," said Major Annesley at last, pulling off his cap, and letting the sun-rays play hide and seek in the thick, short-cut clusters of his tawny locks, "it has made a new man of me. I shall never

forget it-"

"Forget?" she said, raising her sweet eyes to his, her whole face paling, "are you—going away?"

"Well you know, I— Oh! my darling, my darling, don't look like that!"

She was gathered in his arms; sobbing against his breast; his kisses rained upon her lips, her hair, her fair brow; all the pent-up passion and tenderness of the past month were lavished on her now, in this the hour of her full and sweet content. Whatever the future might hold of loss or sorrow, she had just this one hour of fulness and of joy. It was her own, no one could take it from her, no one could rob her of its sweet memory in the future.

In her heart she had known that he loved her; had said so over and over again to herself in the quiet watches of the night, when the water beneath her window sobbing against the rocks, and seemed like the happy sighing of her own breast.

Then she had dreamed. Now she felt; wondering, that she of all the world should be so blest; realising all her own unfitnesses to be Major Annesley's wife, yet not altogether abashed, since he had chosen her and crowned her with the rose-crown of his love.

"You love me, my darling?" he murmured, bending closely over her to watch the sweet face change and glow; "I knew

you did-I knew you did.'

Her hat lay upon the mossy floor of the wood; her bared head lay back against her lover's breast; her eyes closed as his lips touched hers and lingered there. She was living her little day, like some bright insect that floats and dances in the sunshine, taking no thought for anything save the perfect content of the moment.

But love is not always eloquent, and Mathilde found but scant words to say to this fond wooer who had wiled her heart away. To her the quiet wood seemed as a temple, the twittering birds, love's choristers, singing for joy that this glorious summer of delight was shining over earth and sky, making the whole world beautiful.

"Tell me," said Clement, holding her back from him the better to look into her tell-tale eyes, and speaking with all the tender tyranny love teaches a man so quickly, "does it make you happy to know

how dear you are to me?"

"Ah!" she said, "you know: you know more than I can tell you; but there are some things I must say."

There was a little, tender trouble in her voice, a tiny pucker between the finely-

pencilled brows.

"Well?" he said, letting her move away from him, and watching her, not without some trouble on his own part as it seemed, as she stood there before him tall and fair as a lily, and with something of the lily's tint beginning to show upon her cheek, robbing the roses. She drew a deep breath, gathering up her courage, and then

"You say you knew I loved youyou know it now better than ever I am sure, and how-happy-I am; but, I don't want you to think that I don't know -don't realise-don't feel in my very heart of hearts, how many things there are, there must be-which make me hardly fit, even loving you as I do, to be your wife. Those belonging to you will feel all this more than you do-because you-love me" (this with a faint smile, and a charming gesture of the hands, as who should say, "We will put you out of court, you are prejudiced in favour of the prisoner at the bar, and, therefore, you cannot see things as others will"); "and, what I want to say to you is this, you must tell them I will try so hard to grow more what I ought to be in every way, you can tell them about all the books you have lent me, and how I have read them—I almost know the 'Keats' you gave me off by heart-indeed

It is hard for Mattie to go on; for Clement has turned away from her. He is staring on to where the glimmer of the sea shows bright between the veil of the trees; his lips are set hard together, and show palely under the heavy sweeping moustache.

These signs of trouble she cannot see;

she only knows that he has turned away from her, that she must have said something to vex him sorely, though she cannot tell what. She takes a timid step or two, comes up beside him, and lays her hand upon his arm.

"Have I made you angry?" she says,

trembling, "tell me, if I have?"

Then he turns and faces her, and she staggers back as though he had struck her a cruel blow.

CHAPTER II.

And this is why I sojourn here Alone, and palely loitering; Though the sedge is withered from the lake, And no birds sing.

CLEMENT did not let the girl with the wide, frightened eyes stray far or long. He caught and held her again quickly enough; and as he watched her the hardness died out of his face, and a brightness, as of tears, gathered in the eyes that met hers.

Woman-like, Mattie, at sight of this, forgot her fears-forgot all save that the man she loved was there before her, and

in sorrow.

"What is it ?" she said, clinging to him. "What is it troubles you so-my-love?"

The exaltation of the moment seemed to give her strength to cast aside her natural timidity—to speak as if she had long held the right to be his help and comfort in whatsoever trials might beset him.

"Tell me," she pleaded, turning and touching with her lips the hand that rested on her shoulder with such a heavy, tremulous pressure; "Tell me, and let me

share it.

Though she knew it not, Mathilde was in truth about to share, even to the uttermost, that heavy burden that pressed so sorely on her lover's life. Though she knew it not, she was asking at his hands a gift of bitterness-asking him to put to her lips the chalice of a bitter pain.

"Yes," he said at last, still holding her, but looking far away above her bowed head as if at something he alone could see, "I will speak now, and you shall listen; you shall know the trouble that weighs down my heart and life; you shall hear of the chain that binds me close and fast in a hateful bondage. Mattie, my dear one, I did not mean to let things come to this; I would have prevented it if I could, for your dear sake. I have been weak, I know; I have let myself drift, have let you drift along with me, believing me-free."

That last word cost in the saying, and

he felt her shiver in his arms. He drew a long breath, as a man naturally does after any great effort; then, as Mattie was still silent, he went on:

"I am not the only man who has made shipwreck of himself, and then lost heart and hope. I went mad for a woman's beauty, and when I had got it I found that I had got nothing else: no home—save in name -no companionship, no interest in my life or thoughts, no sympathy, no tenderness. We drifted further and further apart, my wife and I; and then, when I sickened for the fever that brought me so near to death, she left me. The doctors said the thing was not catching, but—so she reasoned -it might be. I was left to the care of strangers, for I have neither mother nor sister living; there was no one I had any claim upon. I got through as I could; but I felt that I could not take up the old life of jarring and discord again. I wrote to my wife, and told her so. I am rich, and could provide for her well. I had no wish to speak ill of her; beyond her perfect heartlessness there was, indeed, none to speak; and she said that she should be happier living with her mother than with The mother—a frivolous, shallowhearted woman, fond of dress and showwas glad of the additional income; glad, as she said, to get her daughter back, and to feel that she would not have her will crossed in every little thing—as it had been by me. This settled, resolutely enough, yet not without pain either—for a man cannot break up his home without cruel comment from the world, and a certain feeling of humiliation-I came here. Need I go on with the story of the days, my darling?" he continued, rocking her softly to and fro in his arms as if she had been a child. "I have been very cruel to you, Mattie."

If she had spoken out hotly; if she had been full of indignant feeling; if she had reproached him, he could have borne it But a woman does not love very deeply if she can put herself, her own feelings or reputation, or possible suffering, in the first place, where the man she loves is concerned. And so it came about that as Mathilde Lamotte listened to the story of Clement's broken life and desolate home, all her thought was for his trial, his sorrow, his pain; and, as yet, the effect upon her own life and position which that story must have, had hardly been brought home to her at all. He was sad, he was sorry, and she could do so little; that was all she realised at present.

The time would come when she would see and feel the other side of things, when she would know what she herself had lost, of what fate had defrauded her: the time when she would suffer keenly and continuously for herself.

Now she suffered only for him. As he went on heaping reproaches upon his own head for the sorrow he had brought upon her, she rallied all her powers, struggling to cast aside the lethargy that had seemed to wrap her round like some mist that made all things shadowy and unreal.

"Do not be so sorry," she said, lifting herself from his arms, and looking gravely up into his troubled face; "I am not sorry: you could not help loving me, nor I you. When you are far away it will comfort you to think that I care so much. You can send me books, can you not? and perhaps write to me sometimes to tell me what to notice most in them."

Seeing, however, that not much comfort dawned in his hopeless, haggard face, she made a grand effort at complete selfforgetfulness, at a piteous sort of cheerfulness, just to help him on to be less sad.

"After all, it mightn't have been much of a success, dear; these unequal marriages seldom are, they say, and perhaps things are better—as—they—are——!"

She had begun this astounding speech with a strange, fitful little smile that had in it more pathos than many tears. She ended it with quivering lips, and a voice that broke and faltered pitiably.

"Don't talk like that," he said, "it hurts me," and the growing passion of his voice made her heart beat thick and heavily; "do not dare to say you are not my equal—you are the truest, purest, best——"

"Having been so much more educated than most girls of my station of course makes a difference; makes us less unequal, I mean," she put in hurriedly, clinging with a woman's unerring instinct to the commonplace—fearing she knew not what "but still——"

What gentle thoughts Mattie's words were meant to convey may never be known, since their utterance was cut short and stifled; for, with a sound, half sob, half cry, Clement Annesley caught her to him, holding her fiercely and defiantly to his heart. She could feel the strong, swift beating of his heart against her own, as he seemed to claim her as his own against life and fate, and all the world.

"Do you think," he said, hoarsely, "that I can hold you here like this—and then let you go? Mathilde-Mathilde! Can you find it in your gentle heart to send me from you—to bid me go away alone into a world that will be a desert without you? Oh, my love! if you love me as you say you do, you cannot cast me from you, you cannot go on your way and leave me to become a worse thing than I was before I knew you! I will love you as never wife was loved yet. I will hold you more precious than any woman was ever held by man. Only come to me-only give yourself to me for love's own sweet sake-only let my arms keep you close and fast where no harm shall touch you-

Again he wished that she would but speak, that she would lift that dear ruffled head from off the shelter of his breast—that she would be sad, sorry, angry, anything but silent!

He peered down into her hidden face, laid his hand upon the brown ripples of her hair, spoke with less passion and revolt, with deeper tenderness, with fonder pleading.

She was to be spared nothing, this lonely child of the island shore—this simple, passionate soul that had grown up, like a woodland flower in the shelter of her cottage home. The tender pleading of the man she loves is harder for a woman than his tyranny and wilfulness. "I shall be lonely" is a less piercing thought than "He will be desolate."

"This island of yours, my dearest, is not all the world. There are other lands, far distant ones, where none would ever ask, or seek to know our story-where people would take us just as we are, for ourselves alone, and never care to pry into what had gone before. Do you think my love, my reverence would fail you? You do not know how deep your hold upon my heart lies. I have never seen a woman who could so fill my life. Trust me, Mathilde; trust me, my darling, and do not send me from your side to-day a desperate, hopeless man!"

Still silence. But now he could see the face that lay back wearily against his shoulder. He could see the white quivering lips, the closed eyelids, from beneath which the great bright tears gathered and fell.

If only she would take it in any way but that!

Had his passionate heedless words broken her heart, that she should lie thus like a broken lily in his arms—she so bright, so winsome; she whose laughter had rivalled the singing of the birds for sweetness? What had he done?

He leaned above her in a frenzy of trouble, kissing the closed lids and the trembling mouth.

"My love-my love!" he said, sobbing

like a woman.

If he had sinned, did he not suffer?

Grannie sat out in the sunshine. Her old man had tired of net-mending, and had fallen asleep in his chair. His hat had dropped forward over his face; his hands were folded each in the other upon his breast. He snored gently and peacefully, and altogether made a restful figure in the pretty landscape. For the sun was beginning to dip westward; his rays seemed to kiss the sea and the soft, green turf languorously; they caught the scarlet gleam of the geraniums in the cottage window, and made a glory of them; shone on the red sail of a fishing-craft that skimmed slowly along the rippling water, and turned it into a thing of marvellous beauty; finally, they shone most lovingly on little Alice, fast asleep on Grannie's lap, and kissed the gold of her tossed, fair locks to threads of light. With a stretching out of dimpled hands and the yawn of a rosebud mouth, Pet awoke at last, and looked upon the sun-bright world with sleepy eyes blue as speedwells newly blown.

"Where does Mattie be?" she said, nearly overturning Grannie, chair and all, by the energy with which she sat up straight, the better to stare hard in the direction of the woods. Then, as no one answered her question, she made another observation, addressed to any one whom it might concern. "Wants mine tea."

"Ay, ay," said the old man, waking with a jerk, and cutting a snore in two; "we all want our tea; but where's our pretty maid to get it for us, little one?"

Then the old man gave a mighty yawn, scratched his head, and glanced this way and that in search of the "pretty maid" he loved

All in a moment Pet was off like a lapwing, for there, just at the turn of the low, sloping hill that looked like so much green velvet in the sloping sunlight, came into view the tall, slim figure they all knew so well; the "pretty maid" was in sight already, and tea would follow as a matter of course.

It was wonderful how fast Pet's little sturdy legs covered the ground; how

quickly she reached the haven of her desires and was clinging to Mathilde's gown, laughing for joy to get "Sissy" back once more.

Mattie caught up the child, and, with the little arms laced close about her neck, set

off towards the cottage.

"She is too heavy to be carried; put her down—the saucy one!" cried Grannie at this, wavering about as she took a step or two to meet the pair. Grannie had been growing very frail of late, and wavered a good deal when she walked if she had not Mattie's arm to lean on.

She could not hear what Mattie was saying as she crushed little Alice in her arms, and whispered in the rosy ear that peeped from the clusters of golden locks: "You would not like to look for Sissy all day long, and never find her, Pet?"

And Pet said, "No, no, no!" and hugged the pretty maid the tighter, never noting that the cheek she kissed was paler than a white rose petal, or that the sweet, serious eyes that looked at her had deep, dark shadows under them, the result of many tears. The poor are not keenly observant; so now Mattie's lagging, weary steps, the hopeless sadness of her face, the shiver that now and again shook her from head to foot, as she served out the tea, and cut the bread-and-butter, that had to be sprinkled ever so lightly with sugar to satisfy Pet, all passed unnoticed. In some natures the power of a noble self-discipline seems to be inherent, and of these, Mathilde was one. Upon her lips still burned in memory the sweet, passionate kisses that had thrilled her through and through as she stood encircled by her lover's arm in the mellowed sunshine of the woods. His words, his looks, his sorrow, and his tenderness, were as real and present to her now as when eye and ear and heart had seemed filled to overflowing with an exquisite content. But her work lay before her to be done, and she did it.

I remember once a poor bereaved mother—bereaved indeed, since she had lost by dire disease all her sweet little ones "at one fell swoop"—telling me the story of her griefs, and I, almost speechless myself for sympathy, cried out that I could not tell how she had lived through that terrible time, how she had faced the silence, where once had been the sound of little feet; the desolation, where once had been the touch of baby hands; and she answered me

in her simplicity and truth: "There was always something to be done, you see, my lady, or I couldn't have bided-"

This woman was only a soldier's wiferough, uncouth, uneducated; but all the truest philosophy of resignation seemed to me to be wrapped in that pithy saying of hers: "There is always something to be done;" and, therefore, it is that none of us can afford to sit idle, with drooping hands and tear-blind eyes, bemoaning ourselves in helpless sorrow.

Mathilde found plenty to do as that fated summer grew to fulness, and then ripened to autumn. Sorrow came in sad, unlooked-for fashion to the cottage-home, and Grannie, frail enough before, sickened, faded, died, and, as the first leaves fell, was laid to rest in the pretty churchyard that sloped to the sea, where the waves sang softly to the sleepers evermore. How the girl mourned for the joy and the sweetness that had died out of her life; what tears she shed; what prayers she prayed; how she wandered sometimes through the woods and so out on to the shore, gazing at the bright expanse of waters where no little boat ever came into sight, a dear little speck upon the far-off ripples; of all these things, and more, who shall tell ? It is an old story, that of how a man or woman has to set to work to take up life as it lies to his or her hand, and live up to whatever calls it makes upon the heart and hands, no matter how fate has blotted out from it the sweetness and the light, the passion and the joy, that once shone on every step of the way, making it all so beautiful. Mattie had cruel troubles to face, cruel sorrows to live down, and she faced the one, and lived down the other.

The years do not turn laggard for any of us, because they are sorrow-laden. Nature is pitiless. She will not spare us the sight of her wealth of flowers in summer, her beautiful fields of grain in autumn, her winter garniture of scarlet berries bright with hoar-frost, or her tender violets and dancing daffodils in spring. No matter what our desolation may be, she thrusts her fair spring posies in our pale faces. "Are they not sweet ?" she says, "these new-born treasures of mine, are they not beautiful ?"

It was so with Mathilde Lamotte. The years passed on, each with its burden of flowers, its storm and shine, each bringing its work, its little troubles, and its little

The music of his name had Annesley. died out of her life, leaving but a plaintive echo behind it.

Five times the fields about the fishercottage had grown bright with a thousand blades of springing corn, five times had mellowed to the reaper's sickle; five times the bare brown branches of the trees had shown dark against the sky, betraying the cushat's nest, and now spring is once more touching the island world to beauty, once more giving her sweet gifts of flowers to man; once more making sweet music in the thrush's speckled breast. Pet has grown a great girl - sun-bonnets are a thing of the past. She is tall and straight as a reed, and her golden locks are twisted into a great bright knot, a marvel of neatness. She is also what the islanders call "bright at learning," and a credit to her sister Mattie, who has trained her so well, that she is able to help in the Dame's School which the increasing proportions of the fishing village have rendered a necessity and a success. Pet takes the tiniest of the children in what is called an "alphabet class," and the young teacher's dignity is a sight to see. Mathilde Lamotte is the headmistress of this school, and turns out such grand scholars that all the fisher-folk wonder. She is not much changed, this sweet Mattie of ours, by the passing of the years, at all events not at all for the worse. She is not quite so slender as when, five years ago, she stood shading her eyes with her hand to watch for Clement Annesley's canoe. She is graver, too, and has that wonderful sweetness of look and voice which I think is to be found only in those who live much among young children.

Look at her as she gravely lectures a defaulter, a little maid who recalls Alice of the sun-bonnet in the days that are past. What a gentle, firm way she has with these young creatures, how dearly they love her! To them the cruellest pain of wrong-doing is that it grieves that dear mistress of theirs.

The culprit is dismissed to her place in Mathilde takes her stand in the centre of the large room that does duty as She leads the evening a school-room. prayer that closes each day's toil; and then, the sound of many little voices singing the sweet, old-fashioned Evening Hymn floats out across the sea.

Outside a man is listening. He stands there bare headed, as though the soft blue sky were a cathedral dome, the straight pleasures, and she heard no word of Clement | boles of the trees the pillars of an aisle.

He is changed, this tender-hearted, faulty man, whose story we have been tellingchanged and aged by the passing of the years more than is the woman he has thus

sought, and thus found.

The last Amen has died away. With bounds, and shout, and ripple of happy laughter, the crowd of little ones rush out into the sunlight, treading on each other's heels, all staring as they pass at the tall, grave-eyed stranger, who takes no heed of them, but watches the arched door-way of the school intently.

Presently, stepping very quietly, a book or two in her hands, an air of sober businesslike thoughtfulness all about her, the headmistress following her flock comes through the arched doorway, to find herself face to

face with—Clement Annesley.

"Mattie!"

At the sound of the old well-remembered voice, she starts and the books fall to the ground.

"You here ?" she says, and their hands

Not to part easily either, for he keeps one firmly in his hold, and so linked, they walk together to the cottage that looks upon the sea, and where the windows are still full of geraniums which might well be the same that blossomed there five years ago.

Alice has gone to a neighbour's. is no one in the quiet parlour save a wiselooking cat licking her fur on the hearthrug. As to old Grandad Lamotte, he is sitting out in the little garden at the side of the house. He has his red handkerchief over his head, and is fast asleep; so he counts for nothing. These two, Mattie and the man who was once her lover, are alone.

Was once? Nay, still is, for he is kissing the busy hands that are idle just for once and lie quietly enough in his; his eyes grow to the dear face that he has longed to see so often in the lonely, empty years-

"Mattie-my darling-I am come to ask you to be-my wife. I am a free man now; you will not say me nay, will you, my dearest one?"

Mattie does not speak.

A tear trickles down her cheek. She has loved this man once with all the passion of an intense nature. The sight of his face, the sound of his voice stirs and troubles her.

A dusky crimson floods his cheekmounts to his brow.

"Mattie-have you forgiven me?"

"Yes; I forgave you long since. There

then; there is none now. I am glad that we should meet-glad to tell you

"And is that all?" His voice breaks and falters, the red colour dies from his

cheeks.

She is kind and gentle; her grave, sweet eyes meet his regretfully and tenderly; but she is passionless as the grey dawn of a winter's morning. He would not dare to clasp her in his arms, to press his own to the lips that speak so calmly and so kindly—he would not dare.

"I-loved you so," he stammers; "I-

could not bear to-let you go-"

"I wish that you had loved me just a little more—just enough to hold you back from saying-what you did."

"You said you had forgiven me. Oh, Mattie! you are cruel to me-you would

break my heart."

"I have forgiven you. I am as sorry to feel as I do now as you can be for me; but it is no good. I could never forget. It is one of those things that, once said, is always there—the memory, I mean—it kills love-love, as I hold it. Nay, do not grieve so; I cannot bear to see you weep! Do you think a woman can love as I loved you and forget? But the rest is beyond my own will. It is not that I will not, it is that I cannot, undo the work of the past. I have suffered cruelly. After you went away bitter sorrow came to us. Some one had seen our happy meetings. Oh, how happy they were-weren't they, dear ? And I was spoken evil of. Nay, do not start and mutter like that; I lived it all down. I had friends who stood by me. I thought it would have killed me; but it didn't, you see. Still, there was Grannie-Grannie, who had given me a home since mother died-Grannie, who was so proud of her good name-it broke her heart. She was frail and ailing; she could not stand against it; she died in the autumn of that year; she went mourning all the time. Do you not see that I could not forget, that I could not be happy? Oh, my dear! be comforted-for, indeedindeed, I know that I am right. happy in my work here. I have had no lover in the past, nor shall in the future. I gave all I had to give to you. Now, it is no man's - I mean, my heart of hearts. You have seen my little ones; they love me, and I am happy with them round me. I shall never know a mother's love myself, you see, and they stand in the was no bitterness in my heart towards you stead of all that to me. I could not bear to give up this work of mine; all my heart is in it:

My work is mine, and, heresy or not, if my hand slacked I should rob Heaven . . . Leaving a blank, instead of violins . . .

I found those lines in one of the books you gave me in that blessed time that now lies dead——"

"Killed by my own hand?"

"Yes. And now, good-bye, dear; do not stay; it hurts us both too much, this looking in the face of a dead past which can know no resurrection. Go, and may Heaven be with you!"

He took her gently in his arms, and kissed her on the lips and on the brow she him. Then he went—silently, as she

would have him.

With streaming eyes she watched him down the road, and at the turn, as he looked back, she raised her hand a moment heavenward.

That was the end of Mathilde's love story.

IN WOLF'S CLOTHING. By H. M. PAULL.

CHAPTER I.

In the early part of the summer of 1870 I happened to be in South Devonshire. My sister Bertha had been unwell for some time, and the doctors had ordered her a complete change.

We agreed that Devonshire was the county which called for exploration on our part. We had never visited it, and it seemed a good opportunity to do so.

We both paint, and it is notorious that Devonshire is a paradise for artists.

We established ourselves at the seaside, and spent a very pleasant fortnight, making excursions inland, as opportunity served, for the purpose of sketching.

I began a somewhat important picture; but its progress was interrupted by our discovery that Bertha's health, so far from improving, was certainly deteriorating. She grew languid and disinclined to move from the beach. She slept badly, and altogether it became clear that the south coast of Devonshire was not favourable to her health.

Without a day's delay we took train inland, finally pitching our tent, metaphorically, on the borders of Dartmoor. It was not entirely an unknown country to us; for we had made one or two excursions as far as the moor during the preceding fortnight, and had been greatly charmed

with the scenery. Hence, far from regretting our move, in the course of a few days we became thoroughly reconciled to it.

We had taken up our head-quarters at an outlying farm-house to which we had been recommended by the proprietor of the hotel in the village. The hotel was full, so the landlord had no motive in misleading us.

We found Mr. Russell, the farmer, an excellent specimen of the species, and, although the cookery of his household was not all that could be desired, the food was plentiful and wholesome.

He kept a very neat little trap, of which he only made use once a week when driving to the village; at other times it was at our disposal, and we made frequent excursions in the surrounding neighbourhood, under the guidance of a boy, who was promoted for the occasion to the post of coachman. Though more accustomed to driving a cart than a gig, he knew the horse, and so managed very well.

We found it very pleasant to start soon after breakfast, and, taking our painting apparatus with us, together with some lunch, fix on a favourite spot, and then paint until late in the afternoon. After which we would drive back to the nearest approach to dinner which we could obtain.

Undeterred by my failure to finish my former picture, I started another important one, from a view of Hay Tor. I had nearly finished it. One day more and it would be completed.

We had arranged that on a certain Tuesday we would take our last drive in that direction, in order that I might finish my painting. After that, we would seek fresh fields to conquer.

Unfortunately, when Tuesday morning came, my sister Bertha found herself far from well. She confessed that she had had a bad night, and felt utterly disinclined to leave the house.

I was very much annoyed, both on her account and my own, for there had been signs of breaking weather, and Mr. Russell informed us that there was no doubt that in the course of another day or so we should have a thorough change.

"You must not think of staying in on my account," said Bertha, decidedly. "I shall be perfectly comfortable here; all I want is a little rest. You had better have your trip, and finish your picture, by all

means."

far as the moor during the preceding I protested that I did not like to leave fortnight, and had been greatly charmed her alone, as she was not feeling so well as

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[June 17, 1589.]

I at last allowed myself to be persuaded, and placed Bertha in the charge of Mrs. Russell, a good, motherly woman, who was

kindness itself.

By the time we had fully discussed the subject, the hour at which we usually started had passed. I knew that I had a good day's work before me, so I made all the haste I could, and hurried up the boy, whilst Mrs. Russell prepared me some lunch.

At eleven o'clock I set off. I promised Bertha to be back as early as possible, and told her not to feel uneasy in case I should

be an hour or two late.

"Be sure you don't come back until you wish," she said, "I shall be quite easy about you; and as this is probably the last day you will be able to get, you had better

take full advantage of it."

I made the boy drive as rapidly as possible, in order to lose no time. The pony was fresh, and we went along at a very good pace across the moor. The road was good, but very dusty. I could have welcomed a shower of rain. There was every sign in the heavens that it would not be many hours before we should have one.

The road crossed the moor, making a slight ascent. It then ran through a copse of underwood for about half a mile, at the termination of which it again entered the

open country.

Nothing happened until we reached the copse. So anxious was I to lose no time, that I managed to set my palette as we

drove along.

The sun was quite high now, and I feared that the light would not be the same as on previous occasions, so I once again urged the boy to drive as fast as he could. He obeyed me, and whipped the pony up.

In a few minutes, however, I warned him that we were making too much haste. The pace did not seem really to be very tremendous; but there was an ominous swaying of the vehicle, which seemed to imply that something was wrong. I looked over the side of the trap, and saw that one wheel was swerving in a most dangerous fashion.

"Pull up!" I shouted. "We shall be over in a minute!"

The boy checked the pony at once, seeming quite as frightened as I was.

I jumped down, and saw what the mischief was. The cap of the axletree had got loose, and come off. The wheel was gradually working its way off the axle; in another minute it would have entirely slipped, and we should have had a nasty spill.

CHAPTER II.

"WHAT are we to do now !" I said to the boy, enquiringly.

John was looking on most ruefully. He had no suggestion to make; he stood help-lessly staring at the loosened wheel, scratching his head.

"We can't go on like this, you know," I

said.

"No, sure enough we can't," was John's reply.

"Well, what are we to do?" I demanded.

"Don't know, sir," was the comforting

response.

It was evident that in this juncture I should have to rely on my own resources. We were now some seven miles from home, and fully two miles from the spot at which I had intended to resume my painting. These two miles were all more or less uphill, and very bad road.

I thought, however, that I might be able to carry my canvas and easel there without

any very great difficulty.

I had already pulled my apparatus from the trap, when it suddenly occurred to me that, even supposing I were to succeed in getting there in time to enable me to do any work worth considering, there was the important question how to return to be taken into account.

The trap was evidently useless. Even presuming I were to ride the pony back, we should have to leave the trap and all my materials behind; and, in the event of a storm coming on in the night, they

would suffer considerable injury.

I soon saw that it was out of the question that I should finish my painting that day, at any rate, and consequently devoted myself to the solution of the problem of how to get home again as soon as possible. It was impossible to drive back, that was clear. We drew the pony along a few yards, to see if it were at all probable that we could proceed, without an accident, by holding up the weak side of the trap.

No; to reach home in that fashion would

be a matter of many hours.

I came to the conclusion, at length, that the best thing to be done was for me to walk home, as rapidly as possible, and get Mr. Russell to send out help. John, meanwhile, was to follow on as fast as he could, having due regard to the state of

the trap.

Seeing that I was resolved to leave him alone, although much against his will, John strongly advised me not to return by the road, but to take a short cut through the wood and across the coombe. He told me that it saved at least a third of the distance, and that there was a very good path directly you crossed the ridge.

I was somewhat loth to try this new road, for the first time, in such circumstances; but, bearing in mind that it meant getting home at least an hour sooner, I decided to make the attempt.

Putting some sandwiches in my pocket, and making John once more explain the route, I left the road and began striding down towards the valley which separated the road from the coombe. I found a stream at the foot of the valley, which John had omitted to mention. There was no bridge; but, fortunately, the recent hot weather had made it fordable. I tried to get across by jumping from stone to stone, but missed my footing once, wetting myself nearly up to my knees.

This was a wretched nuisance, as it is far from agreeable to walk in wet boots. There was no help for it, however; so I pushed forward, up through the heather and gorse, towards the stony ridge.

It was hot and exhausting work; I almost regretted I had not stuck to the road, notwithstanding John's exhortation. There was scarcely the semblance of a path, and thorns greatly impeded walking.

By good luck, I struck on a sheep track when about half-way up, and along this I managed to make my way more rapidly, although I found my wet boots and the clinging of my trousers a great annoyance.

On reaching the top of the coombe, I looked in vain for the path which John

had mentioned.

There were innumerable tracks down the slopes; but neither of them of sufficient importance to warrant my taking it

in preference to the others.

After spending nearly half an hour in valueless experiments, I resolved that the only thing to be done was to choose one, and hope it would prove to be the right one.

Going down hill was rather worse than climbing up. I began to be very thirsty. It was now about lunch time; but I hesitated to stop and eat my sandwiches, as I

had nothing to drink. Possibly, at the foot of the hill, I thought I might come across a stream.

I pushed on with renewed zeal, though my feet were being driven into my boots

in the most painful manner.

There was no stream at the bottom of the valley; but there certainly was a sort of path, which seemed to lead into the wood on the opposite side. Although I did not know the country, I believed I knew the general direction in which home lay, and, as this path seemed to lead towards it, I unhesitatingly followed it.

In a few minutes I found myself in a thick undergrowth. The path, which seemed so clear when I entered it, grew rapidly and most aggravatingly narrower and narrower, until, at the end of a quarter of a mile, it was the merest track. In another couple of hundred yards it had disappeared.

I was obliged to confess to myself that

I was utterly lost.

I felt excessively uncomfortable. I had heard of people being lost and belated on Dartmoor, and, of course, at this instant all the stories I had listened to took this opportunity of recurring most unpleasantly

to my memory.

It seemed in the highest degree improbable that I could meet a living soul—no one, at any rate, could be in this region of their own free will. Clearly, the first thing to be done was to get out of it. Fortunately it was still early in the day, so that I had plenty of time before me.

Near at hand there was a fairly high tree, and I speedily made for it, as from that elevation I might hope to get a view of my whereabouts. But my climbing powers had sadly degenerated. I managed to swarm up the trunk, after several attempts; but found myself unable to climb high enough to obtain a view beyond the copse.

This was exasperating. I felt so exhausted on reaching the ground again, that I concluded that the wisest thing to do would be to have a bit of lunch. True, there was nothing to drink; but I must

make the best of it.

I sat down at the foot of the tree which had so defied my efforts, pulled out my provender, and began to munch my dry and uninviting meal.

My mouth was still full, when I heard

the sound of footsteps behind me.

I jumped to my feet. For a moment I was thoroughly frightened. The stories

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But, if not cattle, what could it be?
I peered through the undergrowth, but could see nothing.

The footsteps came nearer and nearer. Evidently some one, or something, was approaching the spot where I stood.

My heart now leapt for joy. This was luck better than I could possibly have anticipated. Unless it should happen to be some tourist as lost as myself, there was now every probability that my troubles would soon be over.

As soon as I could speak, I gave a shout.

The footsteps suddenly ceased.

I again called out: "Who's there?" Still no reply.

This was mysterious, certainly, and by

no means reassuring.

After the lapse of a few moments, however, I heard the quick cracking of branches, and then, suddenly—before I could have expected it—a man leapt from the bushes into the little space in which I

CHAPTER III.

I LOOKED at him in astonishment, and, I must confess, horror.

He was dressed in a most peculiar costume. He wore no hat; his hair was cropped very close; his hands were torn by the bushes, and his peculiar clothes had suffered in the same way, only to a still greater extent.

In a moment the truth flashed across my mind—I was face to face with an escaped convict! The dress and broad arrows were conclusive evidence.

We looked at each other in silence for a moment or two.

Then the convict spoke in a harsh, rough tone, which, however, might not have been intentionally rough, for he was apparently famished.

"Give me that sandwich," he said.

I handed the small packet to him. It was no deprivation to me to part with it. If that were all he wanted he was assuredly most welcome.

The man devoured the food in silence. I watched him keenly, trying meanwhile to calm myself sufficiently to think what I had better do next.

He was not a tall man; in fact, not taller than myself; but he was much bigger. His hands were large and sinewy; his neck was short and bull-like, denoting great physical strength. He carried in his hand a short iron bar, of which, doubtless, he had made use in effecting his escape. It was a nasty-looking weapon. I did not like the appearance of it at all.

Secretly I wished I had a revolver; but I had nothing about me more deadly than

my penknife.

The man did not make so much difficulty about the sandwiches as I had done.

Presently, he demanded some drink; but I assured him, that, to my regret, I had no flask about me.

When he had finished the sandwiches he threw himself down at the foot of the tree, remarking, partly to himself and partly to me, that he was dead tired.

I felt in a most embarrassing situation.
I would, willingly, have left the fellow to himself; but I had not the slightest idea in what direction to escape, even if escape were possible.

So far, the man had shown no disposition to interfere with my movements; but that may have been because he knew there was no necessity for him to do so.

I hoped that he was going to fall asleep; but my hopes were disappointed. He did not even shut his eyes.

After about ten minutes' rest he seemed to be slightly recovered.

Turning to me, he said: "What are you

doin' here, guvnor ?"

I told him, simply, that I had lost my
way, my trap having broken down. I
thought it just as well to conciliate him,

any tourist whom I had met by accident.

I informed him that I was lodging at
Farmer Russell's, and asked him if he could
direct me towards it, promising him a considerable reward if he could do so.

so treated him as I should have treated

He gave a short laugh, and seemed somewhat assured at my way of putting the case to him.

"Why, bless your heart, sir," he said, in a not unpleasant tone, "I've never been 'ere before in my life. I'm as lost as you are—and more so. I come from London."

"Not immediately," I said, with a smile, to put things on as pleasant a footing as I was able.

"Well, no," he said, with a frown crossing his countenance. "You can guess where I come from, I suppose?"

"There's no need to mention the place,"

I said, not wishing to make him feel more

uncomfortable than necessary.

"No, there ain't," he assented; "but I've bid it good-bye, I hope, for good, though it's forty to one if I can get clear But they'll have some trouble before they take me again, that I can promise them."

I was, certainly, in a strange situation; in the heart of a wood, talking in a confidential way to an escaped convict.

Doubtless, it was my duty as a citizen to defend the majesty of the law; to recapture this escaped convict; and to take him to a place where he could be securely kept, prior to his re-incarceration.

But some duties are extremely difficult of performance, and a single glance at my convict friend showed me that on this occasion I should be lucky if he allowed me my independence of action, on con-

dition that I respected his.

In fact, the more I reflected the more awkward my position appeared. I was entirely in this man's power. If it came to a struggle he could do just what he liked with me.

There was absolutely nothing for me to do, but to make the best of it; to try to avoid any thing calculated to aggravate him, and to hope that he would not too

far abuse his advantage.

"It is unpleasant," I said, in as cheerful a tone as I could assume, "that you are a stranger on Dartmoor. We seem to be in the same box. Have you no idea of the direction in which any town lies?"

"Never a bit," he replied. "I come here quite by chance. I've had to change my way a dozen times. You see, I can't ask my way very well," he said, grimly, "it's too dangerous; so I've got to find it

out for myself."

"Yes," I remarked, "that is one of the disadvantages of being in your position. Now, I have, naturally, been wishing that I could meet some one of whom I could ask the way. What are we to do now? It is imperative that I should get home as

early as possible."

"Well, I tell you what I'm going to do," he said, listlessly. "I'm going to lay here for half an hour. I've been on my legs the last dozen hours, without bite or sup of any kind, so a little rest won't do any harm. You set down too, will

"Thanks," I answered; "but, as I told you, I am in a great hurry to get home; so, as I cannot do you any good I am | benefit of the doubt."

afraid, I think the best thing I can do is to try to find my way out of this wood by myself."

He suddenly started to his feet.

"No, you don't," he shouted, in a threatening tone. "Just you set down when I tell you, now."

This was embarrassing, and no mistake; but there was nothing for it but to

I sat on the ground a little distance

from him.

"It's rather lucky, for me, I've met you," he said, after a short interval. "I was just then wondering how I was going to get on. I guess I should have had to have done a bit of burgling to-night, for I couldn't have gone much further. But, now that I've met you, I fancy I shall be able to get along more easy."

"If I can help you in any way," I said, "I shall be happy to do so; though I really don't know whether I ought to. You can see, I shall be running some risk; as any one who aids or abets a convict to escape, lays himself open to heavy punish-

"Oh, don't bother yourself about that," replied the man; "I don't want to hurt you, if I can help it; you've only got to do just what I tell you to do, that's allif you don't I'll not be answerable for the consequences."

This was comforting for me!

"Why, you don't think I've found my way out of that hole," he continued, jerking his thumb over his shoulder to indicate the prison, "without having run some risks?-why, I don't quite know yet what I've done. I had to hit a warder over the head rather badly, because he came in my way, and I don't know when he will get up again. So you see," he said, coolly, "I'm not going to stick at trifles, if necessary."

This sounded ominous, indeed. It was evident that my new companion was even

less desirable than I had thought.

"But, I tell you," I said, as soothingly as I could, "I can do you no harm, or good, for that matter. I can't tell you where to go, and it's no good your fol-lowing me. We had better separate, each going on his own path. I don't mind even going so far as to give you my word that I will say nothing about having met you. I don't know what you've been convicted for, whether you are innocent or guilty; but am willing to give you the

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"Very kind that is of you, guvnor," he said, grimly; "but I want something more than that—sit down will you! Now, how much money have you got?"

"Very little," I replied. "Only a few

shillings.

"Well, hand 'em over; they're better

than nothin' at all."

I gave the fellow what I had. Resistance was useless. It amounted to five shillings and fourpence. He soon discovered, though, that I had a watch; and that also changed hands, together with my silver pencil-case, and one or two trinkets.

By this time, I was beginning to feel intensely indignant; but indignation was entirely thrown away. I was, obviously, at the man's mercy. Even supposing that he did not possess the iron bar, his physical strength was so far superior to mine, that he could have broken my neck without much difficulty.

"Now, then," I said, "I've given you all I have got. I can do no more for

you."

It would have been wise for me to have said no more; but, in my intense anger, I

let my tongue move rather freely.

"A few minutes ago," I said, "I told you I was ready to let you escape if you could, and would even have helped you, as far as I might have been able; but, now that you have shown yourself so ungrateful, I withdraw the promise I gave you, and I shall be by no means sorry to hear you are recaptured and taken back to the punishment you so richly deserve."

Directly I had spoken, I regretted it.

He rose to his feet again.

"All right, guvnor," he said, "don't alarm yourself. But you and me ain't done yet—we ain't said good bye to each other yet."

"Why, what more do you want?" I demanded. "You may search me if you like, I have not got another farthing about

me."

"Praps not," he said, coolly; "but you've got something on that I want, all the same."

I looked at the fellow in wonder, quite

ignorant of his meaning.

"What I want," he said, coming close to me, and putting his hand on my arm, "is them clothes you're wearing."

I started back in horror.

"You see," he explained, "as long as I've got these togs on, I can't go near a house; but when I'm dressed like you are,

there'll be some chance of getting through, so now you'll kindly take them things off as sharp as you like."

"But, what am I to wear?" I gasped.
"Oh, you can just put on my togs; they ain't half bad when you've got used to 'em."

I was dumbfoundered. I turned away for an instant with a mad idea of trying to escape by flight; but the convict raised his crowbar so threateningly that I thought it wiser to desist.

I clearly saw what he meant now.

Not only was he going to try to escape in my clothes, but I was to be left alone and lost, branded in the sight of the world —if human aid reached me—an escaped convict!

CHAPTER IV.

RELUCTANTLY enough I began to undress myself. Fortunately the weather was so hot that there was no risk of catching cold.

My captor was not content until I had stripped off even my shirt. I supposed he recognised the necessity of making his

costume complete.

Had the situation been less serious I should have found plenty of amusement in his efforts to clothe himself in my cast-

off garments.

As I have remarked, the escaped convict was broad-shouldered, and more heavily built than I, although about the same height. The consequence was that a considerable strain was put on my garments. The shirt refused to meet; to adjust the collar was out of the question. He left the waistcoat unbuttoned; and an ominous crack as he donned my coat testified that an accident had happened.

When the change was complete he certainly looked a guy. I could not help hoping that any one who saw him would at once jump to the conclusion that he had

stolen his clothing.

My hat refused to stay on his head. He tore the lining out; but even then he could only wear it perched uneasily at the

back of his head.

I had all the time been wondering what he would do when he came to my boots. His foot was of the massive type, whilst mine was certainly not larger than the average. Added to that, my fall into the stream had made them shrink. It was clear to me he would never be able to get them on. After trying once or twice, he gave it up as a bad job.

"I guess I'll have to stick to my own boots after all," he said. "I must change

them when I get to some town."

I was extremely pleased that it was out of the question for him to appropriate mine. His heavy, clumping pair would have still further hampered my march. As it was, I felt so excessively uncomfortable in the sack-like, coarse clothing in which I was forced to dress myself, that I was sufficiently miserable.

"Now then," he said, when he had made the best toilet possible in the circumstances, "I think we can say good-bye

to each other."

I was more than ready to do so. At that moment I was seated on the ground, trying hard to force on my boots, which had so shrunk that I found it a most difficult job.

The man watched me for a moment,

and then told me to stop.

"I don't think you'll be able to get those on," he remarked. "You'd better let me take them after all."

He coolly appropriated them, and tossed them as far as he could into the bushes.

"You see," he said, kindly deigning to explain the motive of his action, "I don't want you to find your way home too The longer you're about it, the better for me."

I was dumb with anger. I believe, at that moment, I could have shot him with

"I wish I had a little bit of rope," he said half to himself, "I would then make matters still more sure."

I was thankful enough that his wish I had no desire to be was ungratified.

left bound as well as lost.

He felt in my pockets as if searching for the needed rope, and then drew out my handkerchief.

This brought matters to a crisis.

Coward although I had so far shown myself to be, the idea of being left alone in the middle of a wood in Dartmoor, tied to a tree, made me fairly desperate.

He had let his crowbar fall on the grass

whilst dressing.

I made a quick jump for it, and seized

it before he could prevent me.

I suppose I must have looked dangerous; for, without another word, he sprang into the bushes and made his way rapidly through them.

I had half a mind to follow him; but the rapidity with which he disappeared convinced me that it was impossible for me

to catch him up. Even if I did, the issue of the struggle would be doubtful, and I had no particular fancy for a duel in the middle of a wood.

I listened to his retreating footsteps; and, when he had quite departed, sat down to

review my position.

One thing was certain: I could not hope to walk through the thorny pathway and then over the stony moor in my stocking It was imperative that I should recover my boots somehow. I had noticed carefully the direction in which he had thrown them, and, after a quarter of an hour's painful search, at last discovered

I managed to put them on, after considerable exertion, and then commenced my journey in the opposite direction to that in which the convict had disappeared.

I carried the iron rod with me, in case I should happen to cross his path again. Of this there seemed but little chance, unless he were unintentionally to cross my track.

I plodded vigorously on. The first anxiety was to get out of this horrible wood. I imagined it could not be very large, and feared I had really been making a circuit of it.

Until I struck the open country, there was no hope of finding a road, or, what was still more important, a human being.

My own trouble had up to now almost

monopolised my thoughts.

Now I began to remember my sister Bertha. It added to my discomfort and annoyance to think how frightened she would be if I did not return at the appointed time. Still more alarmed would she be when John turned up without me. I greatly feared that her anxiety on my account would have a prejudicial effect on her health.

These considerations made me press forward still more desperately, though I was fast becoming tired and exhausted.

At last, to my immense joy, I saw a glimmering of light between the trees, and in a few minutes more, found myself on the edge of the wood, overlooking a vast extent of undulating moor.

I had not the ghost of an idea which way to walk. The sun afforded me no help, for clouds now covered it. It was pretty certain that the anticipated storm was coming. Far away on the horizon the sky was black.

To add to my other troubles, it looked as though I was going to be caught in the

coming tempest.

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Having no watch, I had no idea of the time; but it seemed to me that I must have walked two or three hours before I came across a road. When I actually struck it, I had no means of telling whether to turn to the right or to the left. In the distance, however, I espied a finger-post, and I plodded towards it in the hope that it would give me some clue as to my whereabouts.

On reaching it I found that I had, after all, been walking in the wrong direction.

There was nothing for it but to retrace my steps as quickly as possible. I had some hope that my wanderings had led me somewhat in the direction of home, and that in another hour or so, I might be safely housed at Farmer Russell's; but

fate was against me.

Coming towards me on the road, I spied a cart, in which a man was seated. Apparently he was asleep, for the horse was jogging on towards me, and no notice was taken of my shouts. When, however, he was about thirty yards away the driver seemed to wake up suddenly. In a moment he pulled his horse up short, then turned it rapidly round and galloped away from me as hard as he could go.

I shouted after him, and attempted to catch him up; but it was in vain.

For a moment I was angry, very angry, with the man for thus leaving me. I had intended to try and get a lift towards home. But remembering what I had for the moment forgotten, that I was now arrayed in convict dress, the carter's action

was easily accounted for.

I was rather glad, on second thoughts, that he had avoided me. There is no knowing what he might have felt it his duty to do. Perhaps, on the whole, it was better that I should plod on, wearily though it might be, and hope to meet no one at all until I was safe in Farmer Russell's house.

On turning the next corner, to my surprise I again saw the cart, but this time approaching me, and in it were seated two

They approached me warily. I walked straight on with the consciousness of innocence, although, at the same time, I felt considerable uneasiness.

When they were within twenty yards of

me, they stopped.

I walked towards them, and asked them, in as ordinary a tone as I could assume, if they would direct me towards Farmer Russell's house.

They whispered to each other, and then both left the cart.

I did not much like the way in which they approached me, but I tried to appear as nonchalant as possible.

They did not come quite close. Probably the sight of the crowbar which I still

carried made them cautious.

"Look here, my men," I said, "I have met with an unfortunate accident. What will you drive me to Farmer Russell's for "

Instead of replying directly to my question, they again whispered to each other. Then one of them, who had been addressed by the other as Peter, invited me to step into the cart.

I obeyed, thinking that as we drove along I might explain the situation to

No sooner, however, had I seated myself, than Peter seized me from behind, whilst his companion wrenched the crowbar from my hand, and in another minute a rope was passed round my arms, and I found myself firmly pinioned.

"Look here, my men," I cried, angrily, "don't make fools of yourselves. you I am a tourist, who has lost his way, and a convict whom I met has made me

change clothes with him."

"All right," said Peter; "you'll have to tell that story to the magistrate. There's a reward out for the capture of the escaped convict."

"But surely you don't think I am a convict? Do I look like one?"

"Your hair is pretty short," said Harris,

my other captor.

It was unfortunate that I had had my hair cut only a couple of days before at the village, where the hairdresser was by no means too skilful. As I wore no hat, it was impossible to conceal this evident

sign of guilt.

I did my utmost to persuade the men that they had made a mistake, and that it would be far better for them to acknowledge it now. But I soon found that all my arguments were in vain. carters were most obtuse specimens of the They seemed to have Devonshire rustic. but one idea in their head, and that was that they might secure a reward by taking me before the magistrates.

Finding arguments, persuasion, and threats all of no avail, I resigned myself to

my situation, and kept silent.

We jolted over the rough road, and at last reached the neighbouring town, just as a drenching rain began to fall.

I was the observed of all observers, as I was driven through the streets to the police-office. There I was duly unbound, and brought before the Inspector.

I at once demanded to be brought before a magistrate. It seemed, however, that there was no magistrate immediately available; and the Inspector seemed to think himself quite capable of managing this case without the assistance of any higher official.

"You'll see plenty of magistrates tomorrow morning, my man," he said to me in a tone that was somewhat exasperating, and certainly far from being reassuring. "The less you say now the better for

yourself, so I warn you."

If the rustics were obstinate and obtuse, this wretched Inspector was ten times worse. He seemed to imagine that all my explanations and excuses were but clever devices for trying to put him off the scent. Evidently he regarded himself as preternaturally acute, and smiled pityingly on me as I brought forward some convincing arguments of his mistake.

Seeing that it was absolutely impossible to get any satisfaction out of the fellow, I implored him to send a messenger to my sister. This he seemed not unwilling to do, but told me I must pay the messenger myself. This, of course, was out of the question. I had no money; nor, in fact, anything about me of any value whatever.

The gross unfairness of the treatment to which I was being subjected, and the covert insolence of the Inspector's remarks, so incensed me that I lost my temper, and indulged for a second time that day in an unwise tirade. Its only result was that I was forthwith put into a cell, and left to address my complaints and protestations to the four bare walls.

CHAPTER V.

How I passed the remainder of that

day I have no clear recollection.

I remember lying down and falling into an uneasy slumber, from which I was awakened by the entrance of a constable, who brought me some miserable bread and a mess which he called coffee. He informed me at the same time that I could have something better to eat if I liked to pay for it. That was impossible; and I found that no amount of promises to pay in the future were of any avail.

The constable took after his superior it was clear officer, and evidently considered that I was of the day.

a deep-dyed scoundrel, and that all my protestations were simply the machinations of an unusually acute scamp.

I demanded once more to see the Inspector; and, much against his will, the constable consented to try and bring him.

Mr. Inspector seemed in a completely self-gratulatory mood. Clearly he had not had such a good stroke of business as capturing an escaped convict for many a

My object in seeing him was to try and persuade him to let me have an interview with a solicitor at once. I knew that if I could only get to talk with an educated man, I could prove in two minutes that a terrible mistake had been made, and that my immediate release was certain.

But the Inspector was again impervious to all argument and persuasion. He said that it was now too late to send for any solicitor; that all the offices were closed; that he had no one he could send, and so forth. He added that I should have plenty of opportunities in the morning of getting any assistance that I might be entitled to.

In despair I sank back on my wretched apology for a bed; and, utterly exhausted with my day's adventures, fell into an uneasy sleep.

I was routed out early in the morning, and compelled to make my bed and clean

out my cell.

In the course of a few hours I received the welcome intelligence that I was to be taken before the magistrate.

All this time, be it remembered, I had been suffering terribly from anxiety with

regard to my sister.

John would, of course, have reached home long ago, and would have reported that I had taken the "short cut," as he termed it. As the hours went by, they would be getting more anxious about me, and would come to the conclusion that I was lost on Dartmoor. That meant that an exploring party would have been despatched after me, and that my sister's anxiety and distress on my account would increase with every moment's suspense and delay. I scarcely dared think of the state in which I should find her when I was at last free,

I was ushered into a small and dirty court-room.

The magistrates had already disposed of one or two cases of minor importance, but it was clear that mine was the great event of the day. The place was crowded with townspeople, for the news of the capture of the escaped convict had created considerable excitement.

I knew I was looking far from my best, and could not hope to make a favourable impression. I had had no opportunity of making a toilet. The abominable clothes in which I was dressed made me look worse than I could have imagined possible.

Before I was permitted to speak, the Inspector gave his account of my capture, and the Bench were about to call the witnesses, when I interrupted, thinking it was high time that they heard my version of the matter, and not doubting for an instant that I had but to speak to prove my innocence.

I have remarked that the rustics were obtuse and obstinate; the Inspector still more so; I now found that a country magistrate could beat them all.

These worthy Justices were evidently under the impression that their duty was to convict criminals, and that those who came before them were, by the nature of things, guilty.

I told my story, and they listened with a sort of pitying smile on their faces. It seemed as if they thought I might certainly have invented a very much better tale.

At the close of my narration, they took no trouble to cross-examine me, but in a short, snappy way, the Chairman said: "Remanded."

This was too much for me.

I insisted on knowing why he did not investigate the case at once.

He deigned to explain, so far as to say: "Remanded for the attendance of the warder from Princetown to identify."

This was going too far with a vengeance; and, at the risk of being punished for contempt of court, I protested against the treatment to which I had been subjected.

I showed my boots, and asked the magistrate if he thought that any convict could possibly wear boots like those? I offered to do him a sketch on the spot, to show that I was an artist by profession.

I was positively astonished at my eloquence, and it was patent that my story carried conviction to the minds of most of the audience, if not to the magistrates.

The Chairman looked a little uneasy, and bent down to consult with his clerk. When he had finished, he addressed me in a somewhat more conciliatory tone:

"Your story may be correct," he said, or it may not; but that will be a point

for future consideration. In the meantime, you must be remanded; but you can have any assistance you may require, or that may be deemed necessary."

"But on what charge am I remanded?" I reiterated. "I have done nothing, and

am perfectly innocent."

"That may be," the magistrate responded; "but at all events there is one thing that is perfectly certain, you are in possession of Government property," pointing to the clothes I was wearing; "and that is a presumption against you. Take the prisoner away," he added, in a tone which admitted of no further argument.

I was again removed to the cell. The Inspector paid me an early visit. His bearing was now somewhat altered. It was clear that the story I had told had considerably impressed this worthy.

He told me that if I liked he would

fetch me a solicitor.

Of course I jumped at the offer. I told him to lose no time, as the matter was urgent. I waited, and waited; but no solicitor came. I heard the clock strike eleven. Still no one came.

I banged on my door in futile anger. I was going almost mad at the thought that the hours were passing, and that all this while my sister's nervous fears must be increasing.

At length the door opened, and, instead of the solicitor, the wretched Inspector again presented himself.

"Where is the solicitor?" I exclaimed,

fiercely.

"You can go now, sir," he said. How changed his tone. "The charge has been withdrawn."

"Withdrawn!" I said. "What on

earth do you mean?"

The Inspector looked as foolish as he well could.

"Well, sir, we are very sorry indeed, of course; but we have only done our duty, you know."

"Yes, yes," I broke in, impatiently; but what does it all mean? What has

happened ?"

Well, sir, it seems they have captured the real convict, and there is no doubt about his identification. So there is no reason why we should now detain you one moment."

I did not delay matters by further conversation with this imbecile specimen of the Force, but rushed out into the street.

The cries with which the small boys greeted me, promptly reminded me of the

costume which I still wore; but this was not a time to be particular about matters of that sort. After all, the townsfolk had had their full look at me already, and it would make no difference to me what they might think now.

I ran to the nearest inn, and ordered a

trap instantly.

The story was already known there, and I received the congratulations and commisserations of several gentlemen who were

standing in the hall.

Now that my innocence was so clearly established, I received every possible at-The landlord lent me an overcoat and a hat, and in five minutes I was driving as hard as I could towards home.

It was a most anxious moment for me when I first caught sight of Farmer

Russell's house.

I quite expected to find some one on the look-out; that there would be a hue and cry after me; and that I should find my sister overwhelmed by distress and nervous excitement.

As I approached the gate of the farmyard there was no one visible. There was

no sign of excitement of any kind.

I instructed the driver to pull up at the back gate, and then, trembling in every limb, I crossed the farm-yard as rapidly as I could and ran upstairs.

I found the door of my sister's room shut. I knocked gently at it, fearing the

"Is that you, Tom?" I heard Bertha ask. "Yes," I replied, trying to keep my voice from trembling. I was astonished to hear her speak so quietly and calmly. As far as I could recognise, there was no change from her ordinary tone.

"All right," she said, quite cheerfully,

"I will be down in another five minutes."
What could it mean? There was no trouble apparent in her way of speaking, neither was there any special joy at my return.

I could not make it out at all.

I went to my own room and hastily divested myself of the hated garments I had been forced to wear for the last twenty-four hours.

Then I felt like myself once more.

I quickly made my way downstairs, and met Mrs. Russell, who was coming from the kitchen.

"Good morning, sir," she said, cheerily.

"Glad to see you back again."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Where do you think I have been?"

"Well, sir, I suppose you have been staying at Moreton for the night. suppose John will be back soon."

I looked at her in amazement, and was preparing to cross-examine her, when Bertha entered the room, looking much better than when I left her the day previous.

"Good morning, Tom," she said, kissing me. "I am sorry to be so late to breakfast; in fact, it is lunch-time, is it not?"

"It is turned twelve o'clock," I said. scarcely knowing what else to reply at the

"Well, the fact is," she continued, "I was so ill the night before last that I felt I must not pass another bad night, so I took a sleeping draught early last evening, and went to bed at seven. It has had its full effect, for I only awoke half an hour These are dreadful hours to keep in the country," said Bertha, with a smile; "but really you see it is not my fault."

I cannot describe how thankful I felt at hearing this announcement. anxiety on her account was pure waste If I had only known this after all. before, I could have endured the troubles, and privation, and annoyance I had gone through with comparative lighthearted-

I considered for a time whether I should ever tell Bertha all the adventures which I had undergone. At first I was disinclined to do so, for the figure I cut was by no means an heroic one.

Having regard to the fact, however, that our host and hostess would hear the whole story on their next visit to the village, and that it would inevitably reach Bertha's ears, I thought it best to confess the whole circumstance.

I made as light of it as I could, in order not to terrify her; but she was greatly distressed at the recital of my woes. In fact, it made her so nervous that from that day our excursions to the moor were stopped, and soon afterwards we left the neighbourhood.

John turned up in the course of the day. The trap, as I had imagined, had broken down hopelessly, not long after I had left him. He had been caught in the storm and forced to take shelter at an inn near, where he had stayed the night, returning with a man to fetch the trap next morning.

My strange companion, the escaped con-

vict, was made to disgorge the watch and other valuables which he had stolen from me; and I felt, I must confess, much satisfaction in hearing him condemned to an additional term of imprisonment for having broken prison, and for a murderous assault on the warder, who narrowly escaped with his life.

It afforded me still further gratification to learn that he had been captured because of the strange figure he cut in my garments. He attempted to get a fresh pair of boots in a village shop. The shoemaker had noted the state of his awkwardly-fitting clothes, for the coat had split right up the back.

The news of a convict's escape had reached the village, so that suspicion was naturally aroused. The village constable was quietly sent for, and, when the man left the shop, he was at once arrested and safely lodged in gaol.

He is, in all probability, there still.

SUMMER IN THE CITY.

BY HARRIETT STOCKALL.

What have you brought me, dear, From your old garden in the west? Come, wanderer, to my longing breast, And bring your treasures here. Syringa, smelling of the south, Great purple pansies, golden-eyed, Tall lilies in their snowy pride, Red rosebuds, like your mouth.

And from that quiet spot
Where we two stood so long ago,
And vowed to love through sun and snow,
This blue forget-me-not.
Ah! lay them down, dear love, and come
Close to the heart that ached so sore
To have our weary parting o'er,
To bid you welcome home.

You come from sylvan joys,
From sunny dreams among the flowers
That mind you of your childish hours,
Back to the city's noise;
From ease and peace, the lap of home,
From calm content of country days,
To strife and fret of busy ways,
Dear wandering dove, you come!

Creep close, ah! closer yet,
Lay your bright head upon my breast,
And tell me that you love our nest,
That life hath no regret;
No haunting dreams of ease laid down
To share a worker's rugged way,
No backward looks at yesterday,
No fading of love's crown!

Ah, dear! what need of words?
With you the summer days have come,
Your voice makes music in our home
As sweet as summer birds:
And lo! you bring, like Noah's dove,
Greenness and beauty, joy for rue,
While I, I have no gift for you,
But love, dear wife, but love!

CHANCE OR FATE?

BY GERTRUDE WARDEN.

It was four o'clock on a depressing, autumn afternoon.

The railway-station at one of our most popular watering-places was not so crowded but that the noisy mirth of a group of yachting men, assembled to take leave of one of their number, attracted considerable attention among the passengers, porters, and loiterers, collected on the platform.

In one instance this notice was wholly of a condemnatory kind.

Opposite the spot where the young men stood, a gentleman sat alone in a first class compartment, from the window of which he cast frequent glances of contempt and disapproval at the loud-voiced men out-

These last were typical Englishmen; four tall, well-built young fellows, with fair skins burned red or copper-colour, gathered round a fifth, still taller than they, and evidently older—a yellow-haired giant, with a fine figure that was beginning to tend towards stoutness, a good-looking, red face, and a manner that was at once genial, didactic, and self-assertive.

Whether from instinct, or from the fact that he was diametrically opposed in type to this particular individual, the solitary traveller before referred to took an especial dislike to this ponderous fair man.

"Great bumptious brute!" he said to himself. "Fancy being married to such a man!"

With this second reflection, the blood rushed to his sensitive dark face.

He was rather under than over the middle-height, with a slight, boyish-looking figure, a face rather interesting than handsome, and delicate, restless hands, with which he incessantly stroked his moustache. His nerves were strained to their utmost tension; doubt, uncertainty, pity, and passionate love were blended in his mind with a great desire for solitude; and, in this phase of nerve tension, the noisy laughter of those four bronzed yachting men, and the self-complacent platitudes of the fifth, irritated our traveller almost beyond endurance.

Suddenly the door of his compartment was burst open. The yellow-haired man jumped in, directed a porter where to place his portmanteau in a deep bass voice, suitable to his large frame, tossed

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the man sixpence, with an air of princely patronage; then rattled down the window, and leaned out for a few valedictory words to his friends.

"I shan't go northwards until tomorrow," he observed.

At which there was a laughing chorus of:

"To-morrow, Teddy ?"

"Well, they don't expect me yet," he went on, smiling with a radiant, superior calm. "I say, boys, we really have had a most excellent time together!"

"Pity you didn't keep up that diary. Might have interested them at home," sug-

gested one of the four.

"You might compile an amended edition in your spare time in London, Gilpin!" put in another.

"I can't make you boys believe it; but I shall only stay in town long enough to see my lawyer——"

"And then take the next express back to the bosom of your family. We know,

Gilpin."

"And, afterwards," the big man went on, imperturbably, "I shall permanently settle down in the North, and put together

my experiences into book-form."

The train was moving off by this time. The four yachting men ran alongside of it, waving noisy good-byes until it steamed more quickly out of the station; and the fair man, after repeatedly nodding to his friends, sank heavily into a seat, and gazed around him with an air of patronising benevolence.

He evidently wanted to talk, and, what

was more, he meant to.

First, he asked concerning the windows, whether his travelling companion minded having them down; next, he grew discursive on the fact that it was not a smoking compartment; but that he meant to smoke. After which, observing with a genial smile and a North-country inflection:

"Eh, but it's good to be in England again;" he stretched out his feet across the seat opposite, took several whiffs at his pipe, and prepared himself for con-

versation.

It was in vain that the other man shut his eyes, opened them with a stony glare, took out letters to read, or affected to be absorbed in making calculations in his notebook. "Teddy" was resolved to talk, and was soon in the middle of a slowly-delivered description of the perils of one of his last yachting excursions, and of the heroic bravery he himself had displayed therein.

Getting used to the deep, monotonous voice, his fellow-traveller's thoughts went off on their usual journey. His eyes were fixed on the cushions facing him; but his mind conjured up the vision of a woman with soft brown eyes full of sadness, a voice like the sweetest notes of a violin, and a touch so charged with magnetism that his very soul seemed to quiver at the

memory of it.

He was on his way to her; and once in her presence he would scatter her objections, her protestations, to the winds, by the force of his passionate pleading. She was miserable, misunderstood, and neglected; eating her heart out among dreary and unsympathetic surroundings. For four years she had been beating her wings against the coldest and dullest of cages; and he was on his way now to set her free. It would be an injustice to her for him to listen to her remonstrances, and—

"Yes; marriage for the man of intellect, as well as for the man of action, is most

undoubtedly a distinct failure."

So lectured the big, fair man, happy in the sound of his own voice; and his words struck upon his fellow-traveller's ears with a curious significance.

"And how about marriage for the woman of feeling, of passion, tied to a clod who underrates her value and overrates

his own ?" he snapped out.

"Teddy" put down his pipe and turned his somewhat expressionless light blue eyes with mild surprise upon the speaker.

"Women of feeling and passion, as you call them, are happily rare among our marriageable girls," he said, didactically. "A woman's capabilities, either of head or heart, are much more limited than a man's. Her sphere is the narrow content of the domestic hearth; and——"

"Domestic fiddlesticks," interrupted the younger man. "You talk as though women were all alike. Is every man fond of drink and bad company? No! Is every woman content with domestic drudgery? No, again! There is as much difference between them as there is between us."

"Teddy" gazed at him with a kind of fatherly protest, and then he inquired, if

he was a married man.

His companion changed colour, and remarked haughtily that he "Did not see how that fact bore upon the question."

"But it does bear upon the question," said Teddy, with the same irritating geniality. "I am, I should say, a good

deal older than you, and I have been married several years to a woman of quite the average intelligence, and of more than the average looks and education. I was very fond of her; she was devoted to me; but, being a woman, she was incapable of understanding a man. She disliked my friends; failed to appreciate my literary tastes, and my love of travel; grew pettily jealous, and teased me with incessant questions as to how I spent my time; and finally took refuge in sullen silence, or treated me to scenes just when I required my mind clear for the composition of political speeches and pamphlets. My dear sir, I grew perfectly wretched; and the end of it was that about a year ago I went off on a tour for political purposes in Ireland; there picked up with some old bachelor chums; passed from one excursion to another, always intending to travel home the next week; and am now at length returning northwards a new man, restored to my pristine, contented state of mind, and all the more pleasantly anxious to see my wife, that I have plainly shown her I can get on excellently without her." "And may I ask how your wife has

been employing herself all the time?"
"I have only had brief notes from her,"
"Teddy" returned. "She knew it was discipline. But lately she has more than once begged me to return. So I am going back a little earlier than I had intended as a surprise for her,"

"And you think she won't have consoled herself!" sneered the younger man. "Your confidence in your own powers of retaining a woman's affection must be considerable!"

"Teddy's" stolid face changed at last, and it was with the peculiar coldness which only light eyes can assume that he turned upon his companion, and remarked:

"I have confidence in my wife, sir." The other gave a short laugh, which he intended to be offensive, and which succeeded in being so, and to his intense relief silence was at length established Even the but slightly between them. sensitive mind of "Teddy" had at length received the impression that his travelling companion had no great liking for his society, and meant to make himself disagreeable. He did not know Bella, and therefore, could not estimate the impertinence and absurdity of his suggestion, that she could by any possibility have "consoled herself" for her husband's absence.

Bella was just an ordinary woman, quite happy pottering about the house, writing letters, or buying little things she did not want. Then there was a course of reading he had marked out for her, which, if properly followed—if pro-per-ly followed——

"Teddy" had closed his eyes, and had fallen into a light doze, the duration of which he could never afterwards estimate.

From this he was roughly awakened by being hurled forward upon his hands and knees, and then flung against the side of the carriage with such violence that the glass of the window was shivered to a thousand pieces. He heard the crash of glass and a terrible roaring, as of some hungry monster somewhere in the distance. Opening his eyes, he found himself in complete darkness. A rush and rattle of whirring wheels mingled with the sound of long-drawn whistling and women's despairing shrieks. And from somewhere close to him came a groan of agony.

He was stunned at first by the force of the concussion. In the confined space in which he found himself, he could at first bardly do more than realise that he was still alive. Presently, by a little stretching and pushing of his large limbs, he learned that they were all unbroken, and, before the relief-party arrived, Mr. Harry Edwardes—for such was the true name of the man known among his chums by the nicknames of "Teddy" and "Gilpin"—had crawled from out of the ruins of his compartment, bruised and shaken, but without any serious hurt.

Drizzling rain fell from a leaden sky upon the scene of the disaster.

Signals misunderstood, and the unexpected shunting of a coal-truck across the line—such were the theories advanced afterwards as the cause of the accident.

But this Harry Edwardes did not learn until many hours were past. The results were what he now realised: a confused blockade of windowless carriages, flung off the line or hurled one on the top of the other, pyramidwise, across the rails; shrieks and moans of injured or terrified passengers; he himself standing upright and unhurt, and at his feet the body of a dead man.

Sick and giddy with the horror of the scene, he knelt beside the prostrate figure, and, unfastening his coat, placed his hand above the still heart. It was his fellow-traveller, with whom he had been wrangling, as it seemed, only a few short minutes

35

ago. His back had been broken by the collapse of the carriage, and the purpose of his journey, good or bad, had been frustrated.

A folded letter rustled beneath Harry Edwardes' hand upon the dead man's breast. Tears rushed to his eyes at the sound. It was probably from some woman who loved him, and to whom the tidings of his ghastly death must be communicated.

"Is he dead !" asked a man, stopping before the two figures, note-book in hand. "Yes. He was in the same compart-

ment with me. It's an awful sight,"

"A friend of yours? What is his name ?"

"I don't know. But here is a letter

that may tell us."

Even while Edwardes drew out the letter, his questioner had been called Harry would have followed him, when his eyes fell on the handwriting.

Did all women write alike, or was he the victim of some delusion acting on his

overwrought brain?

He looked at the letter again. It was the distracted appeal of a married woman, tempted, but striving to resist temptation, to the honour and chivalry of a man she had grown to love.

And the writer was his wife—Isabel

Edwardes.

"I have been wrong, terribly wrong," "I know it now. she wrote. flying visits to London, and the friendship that has grown up between us during the past few months, so naturally, from your relationship to my sister's husband, and constant presence at her house, have all been a mistake. Your letter proves it. Ah, Gerald, pity me and forgive me, if I have given you pain; I have been so dull, so unhappy, for so long, that your sympathy, and your thoughtfulness and kindness made me forget the dangers of my position. If you knew the life I lead at home; if you could tell what it is to a girl, brought up in Paris and London, among surroundings that were bright and beautiful, to be transplanted to a dreary manufacturing town, with a household of an old man and three good, narrowminded, old maids, who have hardly ever been outside their native town, and who think the bliss of being married to their brother ought to keep any woman happy. course, I should have protested long ago; but when I married, I was eighteen and he thirty-three. He had been single too long, and had been taught to think of "are like blessings; they sometimes come

women as of two kinds only-drudges or toys. And as I was neither the one nor the other, I was a failure. And they have obeyed him so long at home that his manner at once puts me in the wrong. Besides all that, Gerald, I loved him. I have never complained of him before. You know it. But my heart has been dying in me for four years. And any man who treats me as a woman with a heart and head, has power to raise more tenderness in me than the thought of my husband can ever do again, I am afraid.

"You have often told me how you honour and reverence me. You must prove it by keeping away from me now. You have your work, your life, before you, Gerald. Let me go back home with feelings of gratitude, as well as friendship, towards you. Don't try to see me again; for my sake I ask it. Don't even write. I can hear about you from my sister. And when, later on, you marry some good woman, as I hope and pray you may, remember all I have told you, and that women and men are not so unlike in their natures as husbands too often think. Good night—I am crying so much I can't see what I write—and good-bye."

Harry Edwardes read this letter twice

through and then destroyed it.

As soon as he arrived in London he drove to his sister-in-law's house and asked for his wife; and when Isabel Edwardespale and fragile-looking, with startled, dark eyes, and a shrinking constraint in her manner-made her appearance, she was lifted in her husband's arms, and embraced with the tenderness of a man who recovers what he has nearly lost.

They live in London now; and the next time Harry Edwardes goes abroad, Isabel is going with him. He has realised at last that a man may have other duties towards his wife than providing her with money to spend, and a house to live in. And he has had the astonishing discretion to let the dead past bury its dead; so that Isabel has never yet learned how a neglectful husband was taught a lesson, in a ghastly and never-to-be-forgotten fashion, by Chance or Fate.

A STOLEN HOLIDAY.

By LOUIS GRAY.

CHAPTER I.

"CURSES," Tommy Smith used to say,

in disguise." When he said this he was

thinking of his marriage.

Tommy Smith was a youthful barrister without fortune and without practice. Previous to his marriage, he had earned a precarious livelihood by writing for the Press; since he had had a wife he had lived very comfortably on her income. Still, at times he regretted, or pretended to regret, the old days. Then, as he was accustomed to say, he might occasionally have to go without his dinner; but he always had his fill of liberty — a thing which, since his marriage, he certainly had enjoyed to an extremely limited extent.

"Ab, my friends," he used to say to his old chums of an evening, as he prepared to start for the domestic hearth, "Ab, my friends, believe me, there's nothing in this world can compensate a man for having to

go home for his tea."

Though Tommy was, no doubt, kept pretty strictly at home, still he contrivedduring the day, if not during the eveningto see a good deal of his former associates. On the plea of attempting to work up a practice at the Bar, he induced his wife to consent to his retaining chambers at the To these he wended his way every morning, and there he spent many a pleasant hour, chatting over old times with old cronies who dropped in to have a glass of wine with their prosperous friend. Mrs. Smith knew nothing of these little diversions, and Tommy, well aware that she regarded the friends of his bachelor days with suspicion and dislike, took good care that she should know nothing of them.

One bright summer morning, Tommy was sitting solitarily in chambers, wishing he had somebody to talk to, or something to do, when an old acquaintance and namesake dropped in. Mr. Tom Smith, the new-comer, was a journalist who, having been for some time past out of employment, had called rather frequently on Tommy, chiefly for the purpose of effecting small loans. To-day, his errand was different and more pleasant; it was to inform his friend that he had at last obtained an appointment. The editor of the "Comet" had commissioned him to go to the South of France, and there witness and report upon certain army manœuvres which were about to take place. Mr. Tom Smith knew as much about military affairs as he did about the music of the spheres; but he had full confidence in his own power of writing a series of brilliant articles on the manœuvres.

"By George," said Tommy to his namesake, when he had heard his news, "I envy you. What wouldn't I give to be able to spend a week rollicking about the South of France in this splendid weather!"

"Why not come with me?" asked the

pressman.

"Come with you!" repeated Tommy, in amszement. "Don't you know that I'm a married man?"

"Well, so am I," answered the press-

man.

"Ah, but you're different," replied Tommy. "You're off on business. I only wish I had some business like it to get me a little liberty." And Tommy sighed.

The pressman reflected in silence for a

moment. Then he said:

"Why don't you pretend to have business ?"

"Eh? I don't understand you," re-

sponded the startled Tommy.

"Well, listen, and you soon will," said "A little device has just the pressman. occurred to me that will get you a pleasant holiday, if you like to use it. By an extraordinary coincidence, we both possess the uncommon cognomen of Smith; not merely Smith, but Thomas Smith. Now look, this letter from the editor"—and he drew out the letter of appointment from his pocket -- "is addressed simply to Thomas Smith, Esq. Now, prima facie, that applies as much to you as to me. Why not take it home with you and tell your wife that it does apply to you? Tell her, in fact, that you have been appointed, pro tem., a special correspondent of the 'Comet,' and that you must leave at once for the South of France. There would be nothing improbable about it. She knows you were at journalism before you married. And then you can draw the long bow about the honour and dignity of the appointment. She knows nothing about it, and will quite believe you."

"By George!" exclaimed Tommy, breathless with excitement at his friend's

startling proposal.

"I think it would work very easily," said the journalist.

"But when I'm away she might find out the deception," objected Tommy.

"How?" asked Mr. Smith.

"She might make enquiries at the

'Comet' office."

"Well, what could they tell her there? All old Buffer—the editor—knows of me is that I'm a journalist, and I'm called Thomas Smith."

Tommy reflected for a moment.

"Perhaps she might want to come with

me," he said, at last.
"Pooh! pooh!" replied Mr. Smith,
"you must put your foot down on that. Tell her that life in a French camp is a frightful thing for a lady—that you couldn't hear of her being in such a place."

"If she by any accident found the trick out," said Tommy, doubtfully, "there

would be the deuce to pay."

"But she can't find it out," replied Mr. Smith, "that's simply out of the question. To tell you the truth, I believe it's far more likely to do you good with her than harm. If you only managed the thing properly—tell her a few crams, you know, about being tired doing nothing, and wanting to make a name for yourself, and the good it is likely to do you in your profession—she'll swallow it all—she'll think you're a regular hero."

"But then," said Tommy, "I would not be admitted to the camp; the French authorities would not give passes to two

correspondents from the 'Comet.'"

"Oh, that's easily arranged," answered "You needn't go to the the journalist. manœuvres at all. You enjoy yourself at Paris. It will be very jolly just now with the Exhibition and all that; and I'll send for you to your wife a telegram from the camp each morning, saying that you haven't time to write and all's well."

Tommy had not at first been altogether taken with the project, but this last consideration—this prospect of a fortnight's holiday in Paris-was too much for him. With some hesitation he accepted the letter from the editor of the "Comet;" and with it in his pocket and a flutter at his heart, turned his face homewards, where the wife of his bosom was awaiting him.

When he informed Mrs. Smith that he had been appointed special correspondent of the "Comet" at the French manœuvres, she appeared incredulous. showed her the editor's letter she was quite upset. At first she would not hear of his going away. Then she calmed down a little and consented to it on her being permitted to go with him. It was only after a long struggle that she abandoned this ground, and consented to his going alone on condition that he was away not longer than a fortnight, and that every morning he sent her a telegram.

The next day Tommy started for France. Mrs. Smith was too much upset to see him off. At Charing Cross he met his name-

sake, and together they travelled to Paris. There they parted company, the journalist going south to report on the manœuvres, Tommy remaining in Paris to enjoy the many pleasures of that gay capital.

Tommy enjoyed himself thoroughly. He knew Paris well, and loved it better; and now he had a more favourable opportunity than he ever had had before of experiencing all its delights. Hitherto when there, he either had too little cash or too little freedom. Now he had as much as he desired of both; and this unusual state of affairs enabled him to attain to some-

thing like ideal bliss.

The days flew past on golden wings. Without a care to trouble him, or a want unsatisfied, Mr. Tommy Smith spent his time lounging about the pleasant boulevards, sipping coffee in the cafés, dining in luxurious state, frequenting the theatres, and reading the "Comet." The last was his only serious duty, and it must be admitted that he did not neglect it. He always remembered that, when he returned to the wife of his bosom, he should have to pass himself off as the writer of the articles descriptive of the manœuvres, and so he felt that it would be well to know what those articles contained. Accordingly, every night before going for dinner, he made it a rule to purchase a copy of the "Comet," while over his dinner he read and re-read all that was said in it of the French army manœuvres.

Nearly a fortnight had elapsed, and Tommy was anticipating with regret the speedy termination of his stolen holiday. Seated at his dinner, he was turning over the pages of the "Comet," which, as usual, he had purchased for his day's study, when his eye caught a paragraph which made

As he glanced over it, his face turned ghastly pale. Calling for a glass of brandy, he hastily drank it; and then, to make sure that he was not mistaken, he read the paragraph carefully through a second time. There could be no doubt as to its meaning. It ran as follows:

"FRENCH ARMY MANŒUVRES. "DREADFUL EXPLOSION.

"TUESDAY MORNING.—This morning an ammunition-waggon of the defence force exploded with fearful violence, killing several soldiers and civilians who were in its vicinity.

"LATER. — It is announced that Mr. Thomas Smith, Special Correspondent of the 'Comet,' is among the dead."

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CHAPTER II.

When Tommy Smith read the announcement of the correspondent's death, he was doubly horrified. He was horrified at the poor fellow's fate, and he was, if possible, even more horrified at his own situation. The deception he had practised on his wife must now be laid bare; no further concealment was possible. All he could do was to return to England with the greatest expedition, and humbly make a full confession to her, and implore her forgiveness. It was not a pleasant task, but it could not be shirked.

The next morning he packed his portmanteau and started homewards. His intention was, on arriving at Charing Cross, to go straight to Norwood, see his wife, and have the ordeal over as soon as possible. That was his intention when he started, but by the time he had reached Charing Cross it had altered.

His courage, strong enough in Paris, had quite disappeared in London; so, after much hesitation, he determined to pass that night in the Temple, and put off his explanation with his wife till the next morning, when he hoped his nerve would be restored.

Rolling himself in his travelling-rug, he stretched himself on the sofa in his chambers. There he spent a miserable, sleepless night, such as it seldom before had been his hard lot to endure.

Morning had come. He had got up and dressed, and was preparing, with a doleful heart, to set out for Norwood, when a knock sounded on the oak.

"Who can that be?" he asked himself, in surprise. "It's vacation time; and, besides, every one knows or thinks I'm out of town. I wonder who it can be?"

A second knock sounded.

Feeling very uncomfortable—for he had guilty forebodings that the summons meant something unpleasant—Tommy went to the door. To his amazement and consternation, the person knocking was his wife!

"So you're not dead," she said, quite coolly.

Evidently she had found out the deception, and knew that the person who had really perished was not her husband.

"No, dear," answered Tommy, meekly.
Mrs. Tommy gazed at him for a moment
in silence, uncertain apparently what more
to say; while Tommy stood still, feeling
very guilty and still more uncomfortable.

"Aren't you glad I'm not dead, dear?" he at last ventured to enquire.

"No, I'm not," answered Mrs. Tommy, fiercely.

Tommy gave a start of terror. This reception was even worse than any he had anticipated.

Both husband and wife remained silent for a few seconds after this little outburst; but Mrs. Tommy was only gathering her strength together in order to express her opinions with due precision and emphasis. Tommy knew that. He had seen her do it before. It was a pretty, deliberate little way she had. He waited with fear and trembling till the storm should begin. At last it started.

"You are a ruffian, sir; a scoundrel," she said, speaking slowly and deliberately. "I have just come to tell you that——"

"How very considerate!" interrupted Tommy, who felt that he must put on a bold face.

"I have just come to tell you that," repeated Mrs. Tommy, "before I give you to the police."

"To the police!" exclaimed Tommy, in amazement.

"Yes, to the police," repeated Mrs. Tommy, almost fiercely.

"What are you talking about?" asked Tommy, angrily. "I have done nothing that the police can touch me for."

A look of sublime contempt passed over Mrs. Tommy's features.

"You are trying to brazen it out," she said, quietly. "It's no use. Everything has been discovered; and if ever a man

deserved to be convicted, you're he."

"Upon my word, Lily," said Tommy, in bewilderment, "either you're out of your wits or I am. Do you really think a man can be sent to jail simply for a little bit of a frolic such as I have indulged in ?"

"A little bit of a frolic!" cried Mrs. Tommy, in horrified tones. "Did ever mortal hear anything like that? Sir, you are a perfect monster! I thought you wicked enough before this; but such horrible callousness is more than I anticipated in my worst moments. Such a sin, and crime, and shame a mere frolic!"

And the lady paused, out of breath with her own vehemence.

Tommy gazed at his wife in utter bewilderment.

"Now, look here, Lily," he said. "Be reasonable. Let us forget and forgive what's past, and be friends again. I'm sure I'm very sorry if I've deceived you in any way."

"Forget and forgive!" repeated Mrs. Tommy, with horror. "Good heavens, what a man! He has ruined my life and disgraced me for ever, and this is the way he talks of it. Talks of it as if it were the merest little indiscretion! Sir, such brutal levity is even more repulsive than your crime. I tell you now, once for all, that although I will not give you to the police, as I should, still, never again shall I look in your face. Good-bye, and good-bye for ever!"

And, without a moment's pause, Mrs. Smith turned and rushed frantically down the stairs; and before Tommy could say or do anything, she had disappeared from

his sight.

"Well," said Tommy to himself, as he turned back into his rooms and shut the door behind him; "well, I have always consistently maintained that all women are mad; but I'm blessed if I ever saw one so utterly stark raving mad as Lily appears to be. I didn't expect a very flattering or agreeable reception from her; but I never imagined she would go on like 'Ruined her;' 'disgraced her;' give me to the police.' Surely either she is out of her senses or I am. By George! it's just possible that it's I that am. After such a time as I have had of it my wits may be wandering, and the whole thing may be a dream or a delusion. What between one thing and another I feel quite silly. Really I shouldn't be surprised if I proved half out of my mind!"

And Tommy walked over to the mirror and began to examine his features in it, to see if he could detect any traces of

insanity.

He was engaged in this interesting occupation when another knock sounded on the door—a knock of such terrific violence that it made him almost jump into the fire-

place.

"Heavens!" he muttered to himself, as soon as he had recovered his equilibrium; "Heavens! there's no delusion there! She's come back again, I suppose, madder than ever. What the deuce is she hammering the door with? She must have got hold of a poker!"

And Tommy paused, and wondered, and

reflected.

"I don't think I ought to open the door," he said to himself. "It is not pleasant to have her hammering at it like that; but it's better than having her sparring at me in here. It's no agreeable thing to encounter a mad woman with a poker. Good

heavens, how strong she is!" he exclaimed, as the tremendous knocking was renewed. "I always knew she had muscle; but I never imagined she was up to the like of that. There she goes again. By George, if I don't open she'll bang the door in! If any of the fellows are in above, I'll be disgraced for life. Just imagine what they'll think when they see my wife battering at my door with a poker or something! Good heavens, she's starting again! I must open. Hi, there," he cried out; "stop a minute! I'll open the door!"

With these words he drew back the bolt and opened the door. When his eyes fell upon the person who had knocked, his face became ghastly pale, and his eyes started almost from their sockets. He staggered backwards across the room, and, when he came to the wall, he leant against it, weak with excitement and fear. He raised his hand to wipe the cold sweat

off his brow.

"Oh, heavens!" he muttered as he did so, "it is as I feared. My wits are gone! I've become subject to horrible delusions! I'm

a drivelling idiot."

Meanwhile, the person who had knocked so vigorously entered the room. It was no other than Tommy's double—the correspondent who was reported to have been killed by the explosion at the French manœuvres.

The correspondent showed no sign of surprise at Tommy's obvious consternation. He looked just as if he expected it. Not only so, but he manifested no pleasure at meeting his old friend again. On the contrary, he gazed in a fierce, threatening way upon Tommy, as if he had come to upbraid him for some wrong or to charge him with some crime.

So from his first words it appeared he

"You miserable scoundrel!" he began, "you did not expect to see me alive, did you?"

"No, Smith," answered Tommy, in a faltering voice, "I thought you were dead."

"But you see I'm not," cried the correspondent. "No, I have come back, you see, when you least expected me. I have come back to demand an explanation from you; and, by Jupiter, I'll have it too!"

"I—I don't quite understand," said Tommy, striving hard to recover from the shock which the sudden entrance of a man who he thought was dead had given his nerves.

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The correspondent gazed on Tommy

with fierce contempt.

"You don't understand," he repeated; "well, I'll soon make you, you miserable ruffian, to attempt to put your crimes off on what you believed to be a dead man's shoulders !"

"Surely," muttered Tommy to himself, as he again wiped his forehead, "surely all

this is a dream or delusion."

"Oh, no, sir; it's neither; it's downright fact," cried the correspondent. "I'm here all right, and I'm here to have this I thought at first that matter settled. there might be some mistake, but your terror shows that there is none. I want to know, sir, what is the crime you have perpetrated under my name? What is the crime, sir, you have attempted to escape from by putting it on a supposed dead man's shoulders? I demand to be told, sir; and if you don't tell me this very moment, by Jupiter, I'll hand you over to the police!"

While the correspondent was addressing Tommy thus, the young barrister was gradually recovering from his fear; and anger at the language applied to him was rapidly gathering in his bosom. By the time the correspondent's tirade came to

an end, Tommy was in a perfect fury.
"Look here," he said, desperately, "I may be wandering in my mind, and you may be a hideous delusion, but I'm blessed if I'll stand any more abuse from anybody. My wife has been here already this morning pitching into me, and now you come calling me a ruffian, and talking about the police. I'll stand no more, I tell you; and anybody or anything that tries it on again will better look out!"

To show that he was in earnest, Tommy divested himself of his coat, and began to

roll up his shirt-sleeves.

This demonstration of energy and resentment had a calming effect upon the correspondent. He regarded Tommy for a few moments in silence. Then he spoke.

"Well," he said, speaking in soothing tones, "perhaps, I have spoken too hotly. At any rate, before we come to blows about it, we had better make the point in dispute

between us more definite."

"Very well," said Tommy, carelessly, as he proceeded to turn down his sleeves and put on his coat again. "I'm ready for anything. What is it you want?"

"I want an explanation of this," said the

his pocket. "I suppose you know that just the day before I was to leave the French manœuvres, I, by some blunder or other, was reported as among those killed by the explosion of an ammunition-waggon. Well, I heard nothing of it till the next day, when I at once telegraphed to old Buffer of the 'Comet' that it was wrong, and that I was starting that evening for To my surprise and horror I England. received this reply." And he handed the telegram he had taken from his pocket to Tommy.

It was from the editor of the "Comet" to the correspondent, and its contents were

as follows:

"Everything is discovered. come home it will be my duty to have you arrested and tried for your disgraceful crime."

"Well ?" said Tommy, when he had

"Well," continued the correspondent, rather awkwardly, "I couldn't understand what he was driving at; so, when I reached Paris, I went to your lodgings to see if you knew anything about it. As you were my double, it occurred to me that it might refer to something you had done. When I reached your Paris lodgings, I found that you had suddenly and unexpectedly left them. That looked suspicious; and, when joined to your terror at seeing me this morning, and other things, I came to the conclusion that you were trying to shield yourself behind me."

"Well, you were mistaken," replied

Tommy, sententiously.

"What did you do in Paris?" asked the correspondent.

"Nothing-except enjoy myself in a

mild way."

"And you cannot explain this telegram 1"

"No; no more than I can explain my wife's conduct this morning."

"What I" asked the correspondent, suspiciously, "has she, too, been charging

you with a crime?"

"Yes, she has," answered Tommy. "She came here this morning and began talking to me about my being a criminal, and her duty being to inform the police, and all that sort of nonsense. Well, I can stand a good deal of that kind of thing; but still, when you started on the same line, my patience gave way, and I became vexed.

"Hum, yes; quite natural, I suppose," correspondent, taking a telegram out of said the correspondent, in a reflective way. Then, after a pause, he asked Tommy: "Now you're quite sure you did nothing wrong since you went to France with

"Why, hang it!" cried Tommy, angrily, "do you think I'm so much in the habit of committing crimes that one slips out of my

memory in a day or two?"

"Well, well!" said the correspondent. "You see from the statements of both your wife and Mr. Buffer, that a crime has been committed; and if it was not committed by you it must have been by somebody else using my name."

"Yes, I suppose so. Unless you com-

mitted it yourself."

"Now, now, Smith, don't be vicious," expostulated the correspondent. sorry if I have hurt your feelings; but you must admit that my mistake was only natural. Let us think no more about it; but devote our attention to the queer

behaviour of Buffer and your wife.'

Tommy was rather hot-tempered; but no man was ever more appeasable. In his case the old maxim invariably applied, and a soft answer never failed to turn away his And now the correspondent's apology for having taken him for a criminal was sufficient to restore his good Without further parley he clubbed his wits with his friend's in the most affable way, in order to try and discover what could be at the bottom of Mr. Buffer's telegram and Mrs. Tommy's recriminations.

Their efforts to solve this mystery were not successful. Suggestion after suggestion was made, discussed, and rejected. After an hour or more spent in this way they

were as much in the dark as ever.

"Well, well," said Tommy at last, tired of fruitless guessing, "I suppose all we can do is to go to Mr. Buffer and demand an explanation. It may only be a trifle after all. Both my wife and he are a little addicted to exaggeration. They belong to the class that call a common assault blue murder."

" Quite so," replied the correspondent. "I shouldn't be surprised if the whole thing turns out to be merely that they have discovered the fraud we practised upon

them."

"I shouldn't be surprised; and from the way my wife behaved I should say that has been discovered."

"I wonder how it came out?" queried the correspondent.

out it is; and I have a strong suspicion that that's all that's wrong."

"Well, if that is all that's wrong," said the correspondent, with a dogged air, "all I can say is, that there will be trouble. Such a trifle as that is no justification for such a telegram as this. Buffer will have to fork out, I can tell you, if there's nothing more serious than that. I'll go round to the office at once and demand an explanation."

" You certainly should," answered Tommy; "and as I'm more or less im-plicated, I'll go with you if you like."

"All right; let us start at once. Buffer will just be arriving at the office about this time."

Without further ado the two Messrs. Smith started out, arm-in-arm, to interview the editor, and discover from him the ground of the charges preferred against them.

CHAPTER III.

THE correspondent was right in his guess that the editor would be just reaching the "Comet" office about the time the two Smiths left Tommy's chambers. He had, in fact, just taken his seat in his sanctum when the office-boy announced the correspondent's arrival, and his desire to see Mr. Buffer.

"Send him in at once," said Mr. Buffer. In a moment the correspondent made his appearance, accompanied by Tommy.

"Good morning," he said to the editor, who surveyed him with a stern countenance. "I have just reached London this morning, and have lost no time in coming to you, with my legal friend here, to demand an explanation of this outrageously libellous telegram of yours." Here he produced the telegram, and laid it on the "I suppose," he added, editor's desk. "you do not deny you despatched it to me ?"

"I do not," replied Mr. Buffer, briefly. "What is your justification for it?" asked the correspondent.

"I have ample justification," replied

the editor.

"Tell me it, then," cried the correspondent, angrily. "You say in it, that you will have me arrested and tried on a criminal charge. What is the charge ?"

The editor looked in silence on the correspondent for a moment. Then he smiled

contemptuously.

"Mr. Smith," he said, "your indignation "I don't know," replied Tommy; "but and ignorance are well acted. You know

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what the charge is as well as I do. It is neither more nor less than bigamy!"

"Bigamy!" exclaimed the correspondent, in amazement and horror.

"Yes, bigamy," said the editor.

The correspondent was so astonished that for some moments he knew not what to say. At last he found his tongue,

"Monstrous! absurd!" he exclaimed.
"The thing is preposterous—laughable.
On what grounds do you dare to make such a charge—so utterly unfounded a

charge-against me?"

"On very good grounds, indeed," replied the editor, calmly. "On the statements of the two women who both claim to be your wife, and who have both their marriage certificates to show, in proof of their claim."

The correspondent and Tommy gazed at

one another in silent horror.

"It is a foul conspiracy to ruin me!" cried the correspondent, passionately. "It is destitute of even the shadow of a foundation."

"Very well," replied the editor, "you

can tell that to the magistrate."

"May I ask," intervened Tommy, "how you came to hear of these two ladies, who

claim to be my friend's wives?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Buffer. "When he was reported dead, both came here to make enquiries. They chanced to come just at the same time, heard each other's name, and we had a terrible and most painful scene between them."

"Did they give their addresses ?" asked

Tommy.

"Yes, they did," replied the editor. "I cannot, just now, give you them exactly; but one came, I remember, from Camberwell, and the other from Norwood."

Tommy, all of a sudden, burst into a roar of laughter. He flung himself into a chair, and holding his sides, shouted with merriment. The editor and correspondent looked on in amazement and indignation.

"Really," said the editor, sternly, "this

is a most unseemly exhibition."

"Pardon me, sir," said Tommy, trying to control his laughter, "but, really, I can't help it. Don't you see the joke, Smith?"

"No, I don't," replied the correspondent,

sourly.

"Why, man, it was your wife and mine that called. They thought you and I were one person!"

"By Jove! Of course!" exclaimed the correspondent.

"Let me explain the blunder, sir," said

Tommy to the editor. "I wanted a little holiday, without my wife's knowing it. My friend here thought he saw a way of helping me to it. His name happens to be the same as mine-Tom Smith-and when he received your letter appointing him as correspondent, he suggested that I should take it home, show it to my wife, and declare that I was the Tom Smith appointed. I did so; and all went well till the blunder about the explosion. Since then we have both suffered much from explosions of a different kind. Sir, you see the mistake we made. When my friend and I became one, we forgot that our wives remained two, and so that our amalgamation laid us open to a suspicion of bigamy."

At first, the editor was incredulous; but Tommy, by dint of eloquence and the evidence of several acquaintances, convinced Mr. Buffer was a kindly, jovial fellow at heart, and not only did he forgive the use that had been made of his letter, but he consented to become peacemaker between the Messrs. Smith and their respective wives. Mrs. Tommy had, as yet, no suspicion of the deception that had been played upon her; and by the editor's advice, she was not enlightened. He telegraphed for her and the correspondent's wife, and explaining that, by some extraordinary blunder, two of his staff who happened to have the same name had become confused together, he introduced the two ladies to their respective husbands. The husbands now, in their turn, put on an injured air, and complained bitterly of their wives' want of charity in believing them capable of such incredible wickedness as bigamy. poor ladies were quite conscience-stricken, and implored pardon most piteously. After a little hesitation, this was generously granted.

Mr. Tommy Smith has ever since been congratulating himself on his unexpected escape out of an awkward mess, and is resolved never again to indulge in the luxury of a Stolen Holiday.

"SO YOUNG!" By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER I.

Tom Arbuthnor hated all letters, especially letters from the women of his family. He said, ungratefully, that there was "so much to read before you got

at anything." And he rarely read them until they had been in his possession for hours, or, sometimes, days. But he did read them, eventually. And this afternoon, as he walked slowly along in the heat, under the cliffs, something reminded him of one which had reached him the night before, forwarded from town, in the handwriting of his married sister, Constance Grant. With a muttered growl that it was sure to be "some commission—the babies, or Grant's last cold," he drew it from his pocket and opened it.

Much of it certainly answered to Tom's curt description; but Mrs. Grant left domestic details alone, on the third sheet, and devoted her remarks to "dear Tom's"

own affairs.

"You will take a sisterly warning in good part," her words ran, "and this summer you will not get entangled in any of the 'little affairs' you have so often amused yourself with before—you know how they have set their hearts at home on your marrying Maude Lester, and you have put off proposing to her so long now. I hear there is just now at Bournemouth a very rich widow. That sort of woman is so intensely objectionable, that I need hardly say you will take care of yourself, will you not? and forgive this interference on the part of your affectionate sister, "Constance Grant."

Marry Maude Lester! He should marry Maude Lester when he chose; and many a long day had to come before that hap-

a long day had to come before that happened. He was not at all sure that he ever should choose it. But he was perfectly sure of one thing—that he would not forgive interference from any one, certainly not from his sister.

"Women never can leave a man alone," he said, angrily, as he tore the letter in two pieces, and flung it into the sea.

"Take care of himself!" Did Constance take him for nineteen? If at thirty-one a man could not take care of himself, when could he? And was he likely to think twice about any widow, however rich? A widow! He laughed a short, cynical laugh at the mental picture the words brought before him. He, the young and submissive husband of a woman ten or twenty years his senior, who would, probably, give him allowances of pocketmoney, like a good boy. And a background of relations and friends, headed by Constance, all pointing regretfully to a lost paradise with Maude Lester!

Oh, it was very likely! Why Constance must be in her second childhood.

Irritation made Tom walk at a rather quicker pace than before; and, as he discovered this fact, he was struck by the idea that it was quite possible to take air and repose at one and the So he took off his blue same time. serge jacket, rolled it up, and laid it in a shady corner of a little rocky cove, to which his aimless walk had led him; then he laid himself full length on the sand, with his head on his jacket, and gave himself up to reflection. He could just see the people in the distance walking up and down the long pier. It was five o'clock, and he ought to have been there, too, if he wished to be counted among the fashionable visitors, who, at that hour, on that spot, devoted all their energies nominally, to inhaling sea-breezes for the benefit of their constitutions; actually, to retailing the gossip of the place for the benefit of their friends; scrutinising, meanwhile, if the scrutiniser were a man, the face; if a woman, the gown; of every newcomer.

Tom Arbuthnot, from lazily thinking how much better off he was than if he had been sharing these duties, had gradually drifted into that placid state which precedes sleep, when life is presented to one's eyes as a long, unbroken calm, where worries have no place, and thence into a deep, tranquil sleep, when the calm was suddenly broken, and hard reality forced

on him again.

His shoulder was being shaken, rather gently; that his sleepy senses discovered first. Then he woke enough to look up, confusedly, and then he thought he was still dreaming, for he saw a woman's face bending over him, and became aware that the hand on his shoulder was a woman's hand, and a clear, rather hesitating, girlish voice was saying:

"I ought to beg your pardon for my roughness, but I was walking by myself, and saw you, and I could not go on and leave you asleep. Do you know the tide is coming in fast, and it always fills this

cove 1"

"What?" said Tom, vaguely, at first. Then, as the meaning of her words came clearly into his mind, he sprang to his feet. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, abruptly, "I've been pretty near drowning then. How can I thank you?" he began, earnestly, turning round to face the woman he had as yet scarcely seen. But she, simply saying, "There is nothing to thank me for; you

up the winding path before Tom Arbuthnot

had recovered his self-possession.

The recovery was not hastened by the fact that he remembered the state of his dress, or, rather, undress. He thought ruefully of his shirt-sleeves, and of his hair -ruffled, sandy, and tangled.

"It can't be helped though," he said,

finally, philosophically.

And then he began to think of what was more interesting — the woman who had come before his eyes for a moment, and vanished like one of his dreams. It must have been a dream after all. No; certainly it was not. Her face came back to him in the curious clearness with which sudden impressions reassert themselves sometimes. She had been dark; very dark, and small. He was sure of that. Dressed in white, too, with something bright and shining at the waist—buckles, perhaps; and very large, dark eyes. Young she was, certainly, very; though Tom could hardly have said how he knew that so well.

He had been standing all this time with one arm in his jacket and one out. Now he flung it on, with an impulse to go up

the cliff and catch her up.

Up the cliff he went, stopping once, about half-way, to see how fast the tide was coming in, and how soon, if his "woman in white" had not come by, his cove would have been reached, and he - but Tom did not dwell on the thought; he gave a short, involuntary shiver, and went on faster still. But nowhere on his way up, nowhere at the top of the cliff, could he catch one glimpse of the little dark woman in the white gown who had awoke him twenty minutes before.

"I say, Arbuthnot, a precious lively companion you are? If you've said one word in the last quarter of an hour it's as much as ever you have; and you've left me to see after the boat in this heat! What's come to you 1"

Tom Arbuthnot, thus accosted, pulled himself together, left off gazing over the sea and said, vaguely, that he "was

"Thinking!" returned his friend, very scornfully; "that's just what you weren't doing. Dreaming, if you like! What is it? Who is she?"

Tom's face flushed under the bronzed

he was not going to say to Tenterden, that he, Tom Arbuthnot, thirty-one years old, and thoroughly case-hardened, as he would two days ago have declared, had fallen in love with a woman's face which he had seen for one instant, and that when he was three parts awake only.

It was true, though; he knew it was.

For the last two days he had never once lost sight, mentally, of the sweet, dark face which had leant over his for that moment; had never lost the ring of that girlish voice in his ears. And, what was more, he had not been able to find her, or to find out in the least who she was likely

It was all too ridiculous! He would put an end to such boyish romance! At any rate, Tenterden should not know; though most of the facts relating to Tom's former love-passages were in that gentleman's possession, for they had continued a pretty close boyish friendship into their So he answered delibematurer years. rately and untruthfully:

"Oh, nothing. My father's beginning to want pressing to hand out anything,

that's all.

"Rubbish!" said the experienced Tenterden. "I don't believe it was that a bit. But, old fellow, if you truly are hard up, you'd better go in for that rich widow they're talking about over there," jerking his elbow lazily in the direction of the town they had left behind them, which lay shining brilliantly in the afternoon sun, where it was not overshadowed by its patches of dark fir-trees.

"I! Am I likely to want to go in for any widow?" said Tom, contemptuously, with a scornful recollection of his sister's "Not if I know it-thank you."

"But, I say," Tenterden went on, from the bottom of the boat, where he was now comfortably established with a cigar, while Tom held the tiller and looked after the sail. "I say, she's not so old, you know. I've not seen her; but I heard that; and I heard that she was not bad-looking. And there really is lots of money, without any nonsense. She was only married a year, and the old boy died and left her all. Some condition attached. I don't know what, though. I don't think any one does.

"What's her name?" said Tom.

"An odd name; I've forgotten. No, I remember. Julius, it is-Mrs. Julius. She doesn't go out very much; lives, or is tint which sea-breezes had given it; but staying on the South Cliff, I believe. My

sisters met her chaperoning some girl to a concert lately.'

"And they told you she was 'not so old,' and 'not bad-looking'? Don't you know what that means from one woman about another, Charlie? Fifty, if she's a day, and plainly so. Probably a decided squint, and evidently made up. It's only under those circumstances that the dear creatures ever praise one another."

But Tom made, as he said the words, so strong and fierce a mental reservation in favour of the woman of whom he knew nothing but the outline of her face, that it found physical expression in a hasty jerk to the cord he was paying out to the sail, which jerk drew down upon him a few short, strong words from Tenterden. But he did not hear them. A sudden thought had seized him. He had an invitation for a dance that night in town. It was only July, and much of the world was still left there, pretending to enjoy the fag end of the season. When he came down to the sea-side he had tossed the card away, and said he was sick of dances; but now he thought he would rush up to it. Yes, certainly. Some of the pretty women he was sure to meet would drive this tormenting nonsense out of his head. Other faces, quite as pretty, would take that haunting dark one from before his eyes. Maude Lester would be there. He would please his people and get rid at once of this nonsense, and of the suggestions and warnings of friends and relations, by asking her to bestow her twenty-eight years, her handsome face and figure, and her two thousand a year, upon his restless, idle self. He would, to-night, and it would all be Tenterden might as well come too, if he liked. The Mortimers were sure to be glad of dancing men. So he turned, with a characteristically impulsive movement, to Tenterden, and proposed to him that they should at once make for that part of the shore nearest to his hotel, and catch the evening express.

Tenterden was far too accustomed to Tom Arbuthnot's erratic ways to show any surprise. He assented to the proposal with some eagerness—fishing and sailing are delights which, after ten days, need variety to give them their full zestand roused himself at once, even going so far as to suggest to Tom that they should row in, as the wind was dropping

Half-past eleven found both men in Mrs.

means crowded, but they were very hot; and the curious contrast between the heat, the dazzling lights, and tired, worriedlooking faces, and the fresh air, brilliant sunlight, and wide landscape Tom had been enjoying a few hours earlier, made him feel as if one or the other scene must be unreal, and wonder at the same time which was his real self-the self which had all the afternoon, in a kind of framework of deep blue sky and sunny cliffs, seen nothing, thought of nothing, but one haunting brown face with its dark eyes; or the self which looked by no means longingly round the large rooms for Maude Lester.

But just at this moment Maude Lester was nowhere to be seen; and, with a sigh like that of a man who has a short reprieve granted him, he went up to a girl whom he had seen when he first came ina Miss Morrison. Tom knew her very well: they were in the same set, and met pretty constantly. She was engaged, too, to one of his own oldest friends. He asked her for the next dance she had to spare—it happened to be the very nextand she and Tom were in a few moments talking over all that had happened in the three weeks which had passed since the whirl of society had last thrown them together, and enumerating all those incidents, so small in themselves, which turn days into weeks, and weeks into years, in the high pressure which we are fond of calling pleasure.

"So you weren't at Mary Emerson's wedding last week?" she said, as they walked up and down near a conservatory window, trying to catch a breath of the July night air, which was coolness itself compared to that of the rooms inside. "Oh no; how stupid of me! You were not in town, of course. Didn't you say when I saw you last that you were going to Bournemouth ?"

"Yes; I only came up for this, and shall go back to-morrow. I like the place; it's not hot, as every one warned me it would be, and not full, just now."

"Have you come across a cousin of mine there, I wonder — a Mrs. Julius? She was there last week—at least, she has a house there; but I know she's in town now for a day or two. She came on Thursday to take her little sister back with her to Bournemouth, and I fancy she's here to-night. I've not seen her yet; but she told me she was coming. Mortimer's rooms. They were not by any you'd like her. She's clever, and very

bright. A widow, she is; but not old, you know."

"No, I have not met Mrs. Julius," said Tom—refraining with some difficulty from adding thereto: "When am I to hear the last of the woman?"—"but I've heard her name mentioned."

"Oh, you would, of course. She's not been there long, but she is sure to be popular soon; only she is so retiring—shy, I should say if she were a girl only—oh, there is my sister looking for me. Will you take me to her, Mr. Arbuthnot?"

Tom took her across the room, and then crossed resolutely to the corner where he had just caught sight of Maude Lester's white shoulders and pink and white face. He had nearly reached her; her face bore an anticipatory smile of welcome for his greeting; when, suddenly-in thinking of it afterwards it was to him as if the whole scene had risen from the earth—on his right hand, in a recess, against some heavy dark draperies and ferns, he saw a lady sitting in a low chair, alone. She was dressed in soft white, and the picture she made was so good that he gave another look. Something flashed at her waist. Her face was dark - her eyes were dark, tooand - yes, it was the face which had never left him since his eyes rested on it three days before.

Maude Lester; the dance; the place where he was; everything went out of Tom Arbuthnot's head. He went straight up to the low chair, and said, abruptly: "I've been looking for you ever since. I wanted to thank you—for—waking me. I—I must introduce myself. My name is Arbuthnot. I—hope you'll let me call and thank you again."

She had recognised Tom at once, and a slight flush had crept over her face during his incoherent speech; but it did not in the least disturb the self-possession with which she said:

"I did nothing, really, to be thanked for. I wonder if you are the Mr. Arbuthnot of whom I have heard my cousin, Miss Morrison, speak. Do you live in Kensington?"

"Miss Morrison and I are very old friends," Tom answered, quickly. "I have just had the pleasure of dancing with her."

"Oh, do ask her to come into this room, if you come across her again. I must wait here for the present, and I want to see her." Then, giving her hand when, only a year after their marriage, he

to Tom with a pretty, unusual kind of formal graciousness, she said: "I shall be very pleased to see you at my house when you are in Bournemouth again. It is on the South Cliff. I am Mrs. Julius."

CHAPTER II.

IT was a remarkable little drawing-room -remarkable because it contained none of the Indian and Japanese curiosities with which people so often, nowadays, seem to think it necessary to make their rooms look more like a mixed and ill-arranged museum than anything else. The only colours in it were two shades of terra-cotta, and a few pieces of Salviati glass were almost the only ornaments. There were engravings and water-colours on the walls, and on the wide, low mantelshelf were arranged a quantity of photographs. They were of all sizes - cartes, cabinets, and very small ones-and one inspection would have shown that they were all of the same people: a man with grey hair; a woman, not young, with a sweet, worn face; two boys, who looked about twenty, in the latest edition of their photographs; a girl about seventeen; and a tiny child, with a face very like, even in its still babyish beauty, the face of the woman who was sitting in a low chair by one of the windows. dark venetian blind was let down to keep out the sunny afternoon glare; but it was not tightly closed, and between its bars gleams of the sunlight, which was sparkling on the blue sea outside, crept in and sparkled on Mrs. Julius's hair, catching all the red lights in the dark brown-a brown so dark that it looked black in the dis-An open letter lay in her lap; but she was not reading it. Her hands were on it. They were very small and brown, almost childish in their shape, and the wedding-ring she wore looked strange on that little left hand.

"So young!" people said of her, when they heard her story and saw her first.

"So young and so pretty," old Mr. Julius had thought, when, four years before, he had come back from India, seen his old friend Mansel's eldest daughter, and, after a fortnight's acquaintance, asked her to marry him. Susie Mansel, at seventeen, had no stronger incentive than that of pleasing her father, who was very happy to give his "pretty little girl" to his old friend. So she had consented, and had made Mr. Julius very happy, too; and when, only a year after their marriage he

was suddenly killed by a fall in the hunting. field, his young wife had missed his constant, thoughtful care and protection

terribly, at first.

The sunlight crept faster and faster through the blind, down from Mrs. Julius's hair to her soft white frock, the buckles at her waist, and, finally, to her little brown hands. A smile, a slow, happy smile came over her face, and she took up the letter which laid on her lap and read it again.

It was from her mother; and a picture of her sweet, careworn face came to her daughter's eyes as she read the delicate,

rather old-fashioned handwriting.

"I am thinking so of you and Cassy," the letter ran, "I must write you a line to say this, and to tell you that I had a letter from Cheltenham, from Nellie, this morning. She says she is most happy, thoroughly happy; she seems so, indeed, and has taken an excellent place. served it, I am sure, after all her hard work, poor child! And she says I am to tell you-she cannot, she says-how grateful she is to you, Susie, for sending her. cannot express it to you, any more than the child herself; but, though I can say so little, you do know, my child, how I feel, how we all feel, to you for the good things you have brought into our livesall you have done for us."

Mrs. Julius laid the letter down again, and the smile deepened on her face. She was wondering if any one was so happy as she was; if any one else could be so fortunate as to have enough, more than enough money, to do exactly the things they most wished to do. Her mind wandered vaguely over the last three years. She felt again her father's touch on her shoulder when he told her what it had been to him to send his eldest son to his own old college at Cambridge, which he never could have hoped to do but for her; and her young and favourite brother's curly head seemed to brush against her cheek again, as she remembered the hot summer morning when he had hugged her till she was nearly breathless, and told her that he would, indeed, make her glad some day that she had sent him to Woolwich, like the very best of sisters, as she was! No one could have had so many happy times as she had! And there was so much that she was going to do in the future, too. For a long time she had meant to take a better house for them all, instead of that

say nothing to her father until it was all arranged, and then he could not object. Her mother should know, and she would help her. Oh, it would be delightful. And then, some day, very far in the distance, between them they would make her father retire from his hard work. He need never find out how he came into possession of enough money. They might perhaps make him believe it was a legacy. It would be splendid! She was, surely, the very happiest woman in the world.

She folded her mother's letter again, and was putting it into the envelope with a gentle, loving sort of touch, when the door opened suddenly after an odd, impatient twist at its handle, and a tiny child, about six years old, with a face very like Mrs. Julius's own, only browner, merrier, rounder, dashed across the room, and jumped into her sister's lap, with one of those pretty, graceful movements so fascinating to watch in some children.

"I'm so tired, Susie," said the little, "You bringed me high-pitched voice. home so late last night; but I can't go to sleep in your room when it's not bedtime.

Let me go to sleep here."

"No, you naughty girl, not here. Some one might come in, you know, and you would be waked up. Let me carry you back again," said Susie, with a rather anxious look at the tired eyes. Cassy was a fragile little mortal, in spite of her round, brown face.

"No, no; I shan't go to sleep, then. I don't want to stay there. I'm going to be with you, and you'll tell me a story till I've found a dream. I won't be in your lap though, it's too sunny. I'll be on the

footstool."

And the brown scrap scrambled down, and, after fidgeting for about three minutes, settled her curly head against

Susie's white frock.

Susie said no more. She was verv anxious that the child should rest, and thought it unlikely that any one would call that afternoon; so, laying her hand lovingly on the rough hair, she began in a low voice to tell Cassy a story, a fairy story of Hans Andersen's; the pathos underlying its beauty touched Susie and crept unconsciously into her voice. grew lower and more soothing, and when she ended, no childish voice commented or responded. Cassy was sound asleep; so sound asleep that the sudden opening of the dreary little suburban villa. She would door ten minutes later did not disturb her,

nor did the maid's announcement of "Mr.

As Tom came across the room, Mrs. Julius held out her hand to him with a pretty dark flush on her face.

"You'll forgive my not getting up," she said. "I'm very anxious not to wake my little sister. I brought her down rather late from town yesterday; she is overtired, and a little delicate.'

"Am I disturbing you?" Tom Arbuthnot asked. "Shall I come another day?"

There was much generosity contained in that short sentence, considering that Tom had been watching the clock since twelve for the earliest hour at which he could reasonably call on Mrs. Julius; and it met its reward when she said:

"Oh, no; Cassy will not wake, I think; and you will excuse so informal a reception? I was more informal the other day, when I shook you! Our acquaintance seems fated to be unceremonious."

"I wish I knew how to thank you," said Tom, with no echo of her laugh in his voice.

"Don't thank me. Indeed, it's wholly mecessary," she returned. "That subunnecessary," she returned. ject is exhausted, Mr. Arbuthnot. did you like the Mortimers' dance the other night ?"

"I-oh-it was very hot, wasn't it?" said Tom, vaguely.

All his recollections of the evening being concentrated on the one moment when he had suddenly met Mrs. Julius, his judgement of it as a whole, was likely to be at fault

"Yes, it was hot. Too hot for dances. But the Mortimers are very old friends of mine; and I had promised, if I was in town, to chaperon a girl to it. So I had to go, as I went up the day before to fetch this child," and she stroked the brown hair again, gently.

"She is your sister?" Tom said, with a curiosity which he found it difficult to keep in polite bounds, so anxious was he to know more of the woman who had since the day, a week before, when she so suddenly appeared to him, been his only thought and dream.

"Yes. My youngest sister. My people live at Dulwich. Are you fond of children ?" she said, breaking off abruptly,

to Tom's disappointment.
"Yes, very," he answered.

He would have said so whether it was true or not, it is to be feared. But it was true. He was one of those men who are said ;

attracted to little children, by some unaccountable sympathy, which the children themselves best understand, and instantly

He had spoken in a rather louder tone than before, and Cassy moved, slowly opened her brown eyes, and gave him a long inspection without moving; then sud-denly got up, went across to Tom, put her hand in his, and, turning to her sister:

"I like him, Susie," she explained. Before Tom rose to go, Cassy had arranged for the two various expeditions along the shore, to all of which Tom assented eagerly, with not one moment's thought of Tenterden's comments, should they meet him in the intervals of shrimping, seaweed-gathering, and so forth.

"Then shall I call for Cassy on Friday afternoon?" were Tom's last words to Mrs. Julius, as he stood holding her little brown hand in his a minute longer than he need have done.

She drew it away gently, and took assy into her arms. There was a very Cassy into her arms. faint flush on her cheeks, and before she could answer him, Cassy cried out:

"Of course he'll call for me. I'm too small to call for him, don't you think, Susie?"

Mrs. Julius sat by the window in her low chair, waiting for Tom Arbuthnot to bring Cassy home to tea.

Their first expedition, on Friday, had proved so successful, that it had been quickly followed by another. Cassy, having begged hard "to catch a fish" herself, Tom bethought himself of some pools which contained chiefly crabs and sea-anemones, which he painted in somewhat glowing colours to her as "beautiful fishes," and the two set out together in pursuit of them. But he had promised to bring her in at half-past four, and it was past five

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Susie got up, and looked out rather wonderingly. There was no trace of them along the dazzlingly white cliff road. Yes, there was—that was Mr. Arbuthnot, surely. Susie had not been mistaken in either his figure or his walk. It was he. But he was carrying Cassy! Why? Was the child tired, or — Susie's mind instantly jumped to the conclusion — hurt? She ran down the steps, and stood at the garden-gate, long before they could have reached it. It seemed ages to her before they did reach it, and the childish voice "I'm not hurt, Susie—only my foot; and Mr. Arbuthnot's carried me all the way!"

But Susie hardly looked reassured, even

when Tom added:

"Indeed, she has only twisted her foot.
May I carry her in and lay her down,

then I'll explain ?"

He did not wait for her consent, but laid Cassy on the sofa, and began to take off her shee as gently as any woman could

have done.

Mrs. Julius stood still for one moment, then sent for no servants, but rushed downstairs herself, brought cold water and a sponge, and, kneeling on the opposite side of the sofa to Mr. Arbuthnot, bathed the tiny foot while he held it for her in a firm, gentle grasp.

"Indeed, I think it's only a bad twist," said Tom, reassuringly. "We haven't told you yet how it happened, have we, Cassy?"

"No; you say," said Cassy, languidly.

"She had her foot wedged, I think, between two rocks, when I called to her to come to me"—"I was catching such a pretty fish then," put in Cassy; "only he was so slippery"—" and she turned suddenly, gave it a twist, and fell."

"Yes," said Susie, without looking up. Her eyes were fixed on the little brown head, which, after moving restlessly on the sofa pillow, laid quite still at last now. Cassy gave several sighs of satisfaction, and said in an exhausted little voice:

"There; you're both clever. You've

mended it, nearly."

"Shall I get a doctor to look in, and just see if it's a sprain or not?" said Tom Arbuthnot, looking up at the woman whose soft hair had almost brushed his forehead, whose hands for the last ten minutes had been so very near his own that it had been all he could do to control himself, and prevent himself from taking those two little hands tightly into his own.

"Oh yes; will you?" said she, rising slowly. "I think it's nothing to hurt; but one always likes to be certain." For an instant she caught at the mantelpiece as if for support. "I—I think it startled me a little—just a very little—when you came in just now," she said, hesitatingly. "It's very foolish, and I'm all right; but——"

But Tom impulsively put his arm round her, and put her into a chair by the sofa. "Why do you try to stand?" he said,

gently. "Of course it startled you. Sit still and take care of Cassy; and I'll send

the doctor—to mend you quite, Cassy!" with a laughing look at the child.

When he was gone Susie sat where he had placed her, without moving, except to slip her hand into the child's. An odd thrill went through her. His touch had given her a curious feeling unlike anything she had ever known before. different, quite different from any other touch. Why was it like that? Why would she have liked him to go on holding her? She felt shaken—more so than by Cassy's accident, even-and when Tom Arbuthnot came, quite late the same evening, to ask after Cassy once more, the sound of his voice made the colour suddenly rush in waves over her face; but it faded quickly, to leave a face so very white that Tom said, anxiously, when he saw it:

"You yourself are more hurt than

Cassy, I'm afraid."

"No, I'm not," she said, smiling faintly, "only tired; and what does that matter? Cassy is all right. The doctor says it's only a twist. Oh—thank you so much for going to him."

Tom could not help it. Her white face he dared not kiss; but one of her hands lay in her lap. He took it in his, gave it a kiss which felt burning, almost, to her, and said, in a low, choked voice:

"What does it matter? Don't you know how much everything about you matters to me?" Then, as he saw her astonished face, he said, hurriedly: "I am an idiot. Forgive me. I'll tell you what I mean—I'll ask you everything to-morrow. May I?" But before she could find words to answer him he was gone.

Outside in the moonlight, in his quick, hurried walk home, Tom told himself that he was senseless. What had he done? Spoiled all his chance by his hastiness? Very likely. But he could not have helped it. No man could, who loved her and saw her then. So perfectly sweet she looked, with the white, tired, almost childish face turned upwards, and the soft dark hair falling loosely round it.

Oh, how was he to get through the time until to-morrow morning? Why, why hadn't he told her everything then—told her—but his thoughts were suddenly interrupted by finding Tenterden in his room smoking a cigar and waiting for him.

"I want you to come out for a moonlight row, old fellow," was Tenterden's greeting. "They said you'd be in directly, so I waited."

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"Harg moonlight rows!" was Tom's peculiarly cordial response to this,

Whereon Tenterden put down his cigar, and, crossing over to Tem, who had flung himself into a low chair, stood before him, scrutinising him with an odd look on his face.

"Come, Tom," he said, at last, "let me hear about it, old boy. I knew there was something up. It's so many days since I saw you; and I was sure of it the other day, too. Is it Mrs. Julius herself? I hear you've found her out. Shelton saw you go into her house. What's she like, now?"

"What's she like! Oh — Tenterden, since you know, you may as well hear. Do you think there's any hope for me? Do you think I've made a fool of myself?

Will she listen to me sgain ?"

To all of which Tenterden gravely responded that, till he knew the circumstances, he was hardly in a position to judge whether Tom had made a fool of himself. He thought it rather likely. And then he went and sat down again and lit a fresh cigar, while Tom, with his hands behird his head, and his gaze fixed on the ceiling, told him, in short, jerky sentences, all there was to tell.

When he stopped at last-more for want of breath than anything else-Tenterden

said:

"It's a case of waiting for to-morrow, simply, as far as I can see. Uncertainty, we all know, is trying; but——" then, with a look at Tom's earnest, anxious face, he changed his cynical tone to one of

real sympathy as he said :

"You know I wish you good luck, old fellow, seeing it's gone so far as this; and it seems, truly, as if it were a reasonable wish enough, this time. Meanwhile, hope for the best; and don't you think that a moonlight row might, after all, prove a diversion?"

On consideration, it seemed to Tom as if anything that helped him to get through the next twelve hours would be welcome; and the two men strolled slowly down to the beach, past Mrs. Julius's house, where a bright light was burning in one of

the higher windows.

It was Susie's own room; and she was kneeling by Cassy's bed, streking her hair as she slept, and wondering, wondering very much, why she was so happy, so very happy. He had said he should come to-morrow. He would come and tell her — what? That he loved her! She knew that

was what he meant to tell her; and she hid her burning face beside Cassy's brown one, in the soft, white pillow. Oh, she was happy; happier than she had ever been in her life. Was every one happy more than happy, like this, when some one loved them; and-she felt her face grow more burning still-they loved ? For she did love him. She knew she did; she had known it, she was sure now, before he said those quick, hurried words to-night, before he kissed her hand like that. She laid it under her face as the remembrance of his kiss came back to her. She loved him; ob, yes, she loved him! And to-morrow he was coming to tell her he loved herto ask her to marry him!

But as Susie said the last words, low and lingeringly, under her breath, a sudden flash of remembrance came to her, which made her get up all at once from her kneeling position and walk to the window.

Cassy moved uneasily in her sleep; Susie neither heeded nor heard. What were the words which were ringing in her ears indistinctly? No; they were growing more and more distinct every instant—"to my wife, Susan Julius, unless the said Susan Julius shall marry again, wher—"

When had she heard them? Oh, she remembered. She remembered even the hot heavy feeling of the crape she had worn that day, as the words all came back; and she remembered what they meant. How carefully her father had explained it all! If she married sgain, everything would go to some one else—to Harold Julius in Indis. She would have nothing then; no more money of her own to help them all with; no, none. Everything would be different for them.

With a curious precision she went through every detail: Nellie would have to come back; the boys must come away for good. She could never take that better house for them all. Her father couldn't retire; he must work, and work. It must all be hard and dreary for them again. Oh, no—no! It could not be! She could not

ever marry.

But then — and with a low, sobbing cry, Susie sank down on to a chair, and laid her head on the window-sill—then, when Mr. Arbuthnot came to-morrow, she must tell him—when he asked her to marry him—that he must go away; that he must leave her. She could never marry him, never see him any more.

Oh!—and she loved him; she loved him so. She knew it all so well now. It

seemed as if half her life would go away She could not send him

No: it was not right that she should make herself so very wretched. And what right had she to spoil his life? It could not be right. She would say "Yes" to Tom Arbuthnot; and for her people, hope for the best. After all, it was not her duty, strictly speaking, to do all that for them.

Susie raised her head, and looked out over the grey, dull sea. It was the darkest hour of the night, just before dawn; but the stars were brilliant, and she could see the outline of the cliffs and the restless waves. Their low, moaning sound, which came through the half-closed window, in some way or other accorded with an uneasiness which was taking the place of her last thought. If she did that-if she tried to put all thought of her people away, and said "Yes," to Mr. Arbuthnot—would she be happy? Would she be able to make him happy?

Oh, what must she do? What could she Surely something would come to do ? alter all this for her. It was all so dreadful; and she was so young. If she sent him away she would have to live so long without Tom-without him-without

him.

The waves seemed to echo the words as her shaking voice said them, low and miserably; and, after listening for a moment to their moaning, Susie laid her head on her arms and broke into bitter

She was too exhausted when they ceased at last, to think or even cry any more. She undressed slowly, and wondering vaguely and wretchedly, first, how she should tell Mr. Arbuthnot, then, what she should tell him, she fell asleep.

She was quite alone in the drawingroom, working, next morning, when Tom Arbuthnot was shown in. Her face was white, but she was perfectly self-possessed

outwardly.

"Cassy is gone out," she began, trying to talk in an ordinary, usual tone; but how was it possible, if her heart would beat so? "She had to go out in a perambulator, to her great disgust. She suggested every other kind of conveyance, from a wheelbarrow to a victoria, before she consented, and she was only consoled by my promising to take her out for a row this afternoon, and to go and meet her now."

to you first-Mrs. Julius-Susie-I can't help knowing your name, you know-you must know what I want to say. I've loved you ever since that day when I saw you first, from that moment-I have, indeed. And—well, it's utterly useless to say how I love you; but if you could love me, the least little bit Oh, my darling, can't

Susie did not look up. Her eyes were fixed on the ground, where the morning sunlight was dancing backwards and for-

"Susie," he said, anxiously, as she did not answer, "will you marry me? Could

you love me ?"

"I-I-oh, I do," she said, at last, very low and faintly. Then she broke off suddenly. "What am I saying ?" she cried. "I-I can't, Mr. Arbuthnot - I can't, I can't, indeed !"

"Can't!" he echoed, blankly. He stood for a moment or two, silently looking at her, and then said, gently: "But why? Won't you tell me why, at least ?"

"Oh, I cannot; don't ask me," she said. "You do love me?" Tom asked her,

coming a step nearer.

"Yes." Then, for a moment throwing every other thought away, forgetting everything, as she looked at his face, she stretched out her hands to him, and he took her into his arms - the arms that were ready to hold and keep her for ever. But she instantly drew herself away again, saying, with a voice she vainly tried to steady "Oh, don't, don't, because it makes it worse. Indeed, I-I can't;" and she covered her face with her hands,

Tom took them gently away.

"Makes what worse?" he said. "Tell me, my darling." Then, as she did not speak, he changed his tone altogether, for one not of entreaty, but of insistance. "You must tell me what you mean," he said. "Remember, you have said enough to give me a right to say this."

She looked up at him, then hid her face for one moment, and said in a very low,

strained voice:

"I love you with all my heart, but I never thought-oh, I never thought, till last night, that if I marry I can't help them at home. I shall have none of this money then, and — they do want it so. They couldn't do without. Oh, what can I do?"

Tom had taken both her hands in his, and she did not draw them away.

"But you needn't go directly?" Tom asked, anxiously. "You'll let me speak what you are saying to me. Think what "My darling," he said, very low, "think my life would be without you. I love you. How can I give you up ?"

"Do you think it is nothing to me," she said, "to tell you this?" and a shiver ran through her whole frame; "but I must—I must."

"No—you shall not. Oh, my darling, my love, you cannot say you will not come to me?"

His voice grew passionate. Susie threw herself down on a couch and buried her face in its cushions.

"Go away, now," she said, in a low voice. "Go—and give me time. I must have time. I'll tell you this evening. Go, and let me think." She lifted her face as she said the last words. It was white, drawn, and strained. "Go!" she said.

Tom went across the room; but when he had nearly reached the door he came back. She had risen; he took the trembling alight form into his arms, and kissed the white forehead passionately again and again.

"Oh, my love, say 'Yes' to me this evening!" he cried. Then he turned and left her alone.

For a long time she did not move. Suddenly she crossed the room quickly to the mantelpiece; and, leaning her arms on it, looked at her mother's photograph—at the sweet, thin, careworn face of the mother who had said so often to Susie: "You've taken the care out of my life, child, and made me very happy."

Could she let her go back to that weary struggle to make both ends meet? And her father — and the boys. Why were they all looking at her like this? She could not—she would not; and she grasped the velvet-covered mantelshelf with both hands. No, she would not alter their lives. All those dear faces should never look at her in any way but with happiness in them. She would tell Tom Arbuthnot to-night, when she came home, that he must go away. Her hands tightened on the mantelshelf as Cassy's tiny voice said, behind her:

"You never comed to meet me, Susie. And now it's lunch time, and Sarah's had to carry me down."

She took Cassy from the maid's arms into her own. Yes; Cassy's life should be very happy—all their lives should, whatever her own might be. And she kissed the little forehead so passionately that Cassy's brown eyes looked up surprised, and she said;

"I've not hurted myself any worser, Susie; but you've remembered about the

boat? You'll lift me in it, won't you? Not a sailor; they're all so tall."

Susie hardly heard her. A curious kind of numb, unconscious feeling was creeping over her. Only one thought was in her mind. It was to-night that she must tell Tom Arbuthnot to go away. night, in only a few hours, she must send him away; say good-bye to him; see him go, never to come back. To-morrow she must begin the first of those terrible days without him, which were to last all her life. All her life! And it would be so long; she was so young. Could no one help her? Could nothing save her? The very sea looked dazzlingly hard and cold as she carried Cassy down to the boat. It was all hard, all cold. It would be like that always. To-night he would go. All her life! Oh, it could not be true! Yes, it was. All her life-could nothing save her?

It was six o'clock. Tom Arbuthnot stood on the cliffs waiting for the return of the boat which he had watched from the same spot when it started three hours before. They were having a long row, surely. There was a boat coming round the pier now; but that was not it. They had only one boatman; in this boat there were two. Why were the people crowding so near the pier? What was the coastguard saying? "An accident."

An accident! With a terrible, undefinable feeling, Tom rushed down the cliffpath to the shore. They were lifting some one—something—out of the boat. Every one seemed to move aside, and Tom took the slight form into his own arms, and carried it up the cliff, home, to the little room where he had held her in his arms that morning.

When all hope was found to be in vain, and they had laid her down beside Cassy, Tom stood looking at the two faces. He thought of the agonised look which Susie's face had worn when he left her that morning, and he was soothed — even through his utter, wordless desolation—by the perfect content and peace which shone there now.

THAT STRANGE MRS. CHALGRAVE.

By T. W. SPEIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

IT was the morning of the fifth of August. Austin Chalgrave and his wife were seated at breakfast, the former skimming the letters and papers which the post had just brought him, and chatting to his wife by fits and starts between times. To Mrs. Chalgrave the post had brought nothing-it never did bring her anything, unless it were a tradesman's circular now and again-which, in view of the fact that from the date of her arrival at Dene Park she had never been known to write to any one, was perhaps hardly to be wondered at.

"Here's my annual invitation from Gilstead," said Mr. Chalgrave, as he tossed a note across the table to his wife. "Read it, and then tell me in what terms I'm to

answer it."

The note in question ran as under:

"The Briery, "August 4th.

"DEAR CHALGRAVE, -I shall look for you on the Twelfth as usual, although you have deserted the Honourable Corps of Bachelors — traitor that you are! birds are plentiful, and strong on the wing, and I anticipate capital sport. Milward, and Denvers, and Protheroe will make up the party. Sincerely yours,

"JOHN GILSTEAD."

"You must go, of course," said Mrs. Chalgrave, as she passed the note back to her husband.

"But it will be awfully lonely for you

while I'm away."

' I shall contrive to amuse myself somehow, no doubt, and the time will soon Where was it I read the other day that if married people were wise, they would contrive little absences from each other now and again? Why should not you and I be wise in that fashion?"

"Look here, Francie," said Chalgrave, more earnestly than he had yet spoken, "you have only to say the word, and I will write Gilstead by the next post,

declining his invitation,'

"Indeed, and indeed, no such word will be said by me. The idea of such a thing! Did you not tell me, before we were married, how you have never missed once for twelve years going to your friend Gilstead's for a fortnight's shooting; and with what eagerness you always look forward to it ? "

"That was all very well while I was single; but things are different now. It would be all right if I could take you with me; but I can't. Gilly's a confirmed

his roof would, I verily believe, send him

into a fit."

"My dear Austin, you must, and shall go," retorted his wife, with emphasis.
"Because you have been foolish enough to marry, is that any reason why you should be tied to your wife's apron-string? Indeed, sir, I won't have any such thing said of you."

"If I go, as you seem to insist upon my doing, you must have Aunt Pell to stay with you while I am away."

"Is that really necessary?"

"Why, certainly. The proprieties must be strictly attended to. I should have all the Mrs. Grundys in the county crying shame upon me, if I were to leave my charming young wife without some responsible person to take care of her-fully competent though I know her to be to take care of herself."

Mrs. Chalgrave's clear, bell-like laugh

rang through the room.

"Only to think, Austin, in view of what you and I know, that it should be deemed necessary for Aunt Pell to take charge of me during your absence !"

"But then, as it happens, dear, the world at large doesn't know what you and I know," he answered, drily. "In any case, you and the old lady will get on comfortably enough together."

"Oh, yes. She's a dear old soul; and although, of course, she and I have very little in common, we shall not disagree, I promise you. I shall have got my morning gallop over before she is downstairs. shall dawdle through the forenoon as best we can. After luncheon I shall drive her out in the basket carriage; not for a thousand pounds would she venture on a spin with me in the dog-cart. After dinner, when she has had her nap, we shall play bézique, at which she will make awful mistakes, which I shall pretend not to be aware of. And when you come back I shall be so chokeful of gossip—may I say of scandal ?-that I shall hardly know how to contain myself. We shall be very jolly, never fear."

It may be as well to explain that the "Aunt" Pell here alluded to stood in no closer relationship to Austin Chalgrave than that of cousin to his mother. She had been a widow for many years, and, after the death of Mrs. Chalgrave, senior, had come to reside at Dene Park, and to take charge of all indoor matters, in which post she had remained up to the time of misogynist, and to see a petticoat under Austin's marriage; since which event she

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had gone to live in a pretty little cottage in the outskirts of Market Welby.

On the morning of the eleventh, Mrs. Chalgrave drove her husband to the station, and saw him off by the train for the North. When she got back home she found that Aunt Pell had arrived during her absence. After a few words of greeting, Francine went to her room, and was seen no more till luncheon time.

"She's been crying," remarked the widow to herself when Francine entered the room. "By the time she's been married half-a-dozen years she will have got cured of that nonsense. I remember that when Pell, poor man, used to leave home for a few days' fishing, it seemed quite a relief to get rid of him for a little while."

Austin Chalgrave had been ten months married. He was not far from forty years of age—a thin, wiry-looking man; his leanness causing him to seem taller than he really was. His aquiline features had a somewhat keen and eager expression, which, however, as well as the hard brightness of his blue-grey eyes, was toned down and softened by the pleasantly humorous smile which played by fits and starts round the corners of his mouth. His hair was cropped close, as were also his whiskers; while there was about him that indefinable something which proclaims the man whose tastes and proclivities are essentially equine.

Of his wife it may be said that, although those of her own sex would probably have set her down at her full age, which was five-and-twenty, few men would have guessed her as being so old by three or four years. She was good-looking, without being conspicuously so: having welldefined, clear-cut features, sparkling dark eyes, shaded by long, black lashes, and a great mass of wavy hair, which, if not absolutely black, was the nearest possible approach to it. Her mouth was small, but firm, and, by the time one had been a quarter of an hour in her company, she gave one the impression of being a woman of considerable individuality of character. As for her figure, it was perfection. Even those who were most inclined to cavil with her face could find no fault with that

Never had the social circles of Market Welby and its neighbourhood—which included all the best families within a radius of a dozen miles—had a more disagreeable shock administered to them, than when Austin Chalgrave, of Dene Park, brought

home, without a word of warning, an entire stranger, as his bride.

Of course, one of the first questions people put to each other, as soon as they had recovered in some measure from the shock, was: "Who is Mrs. Chalgrave?" or, rather, "Who was Mrs. Chalgrave before her marriage?"

It was a question which no one in those parts was in a position to answer. She had come among them an utter stranger; and an utter stranger, so far as regarded her antecedents, she seemed likely to remain. At the end of ten months, the good folk of Market Welby knew no more who her "people" were, where Austin Chalgrave had "picked her up," at what place she had been married, and what her maiden name had been, than when first she appeared among them.

But if the ladies were inclined to look somewhat askance on Mrs. Chalgrave, and bandy spiteful remarks about her among themselves, the gentlemen were by no means inclined to follow their example, especially after she had once made her appearance in the hunting-field. The Pilberry Hunt could boast of several plucky lady riders, who did not often "muff" their jumps; but after the advent of Mrs. Chalgrave, they were one and all—in the expressive locution of the M.F.H.—compelled to "take a back seat."

"I never see a lady sit like her," Dobson the whip would remark. "I'm blessed if she and her 'oss don't seem all one piece."

More than once Sir Harry was heard to

"Where on earth can that woman have been brought up? She seems to understand more about horses, and to be able to get more out of them, than the lot of us put together."

Whatever else might be said or hinted to the discredit of Mrs. Chalgrave, no one could assert that she gave herself airs. She was, indeed, one of the most simplemannered and unassuming of women.

For one thing, she never pretended to be more accomplished or better educated than she really was. She confessed at once that she could not sing, and that she never played in public, but only to please her husband when they were alone. Although fond of reading, she laughingly admitted that she rarely ventured on anything more solid than a novel. On the other hand, she spoke French as fluently and correctly as she spoke English; and it was

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evident that she had seen something of the world, in view of the fact that her remarks about Paris and Berlin betrayed more than

those capitals.

It was the Hon. Mrs. Durville Lacy who first spoke of Francine as "that strange Mrs. Chalgrave;" and as Mrs. Durville Lacy was one of the shining lights of county society, and greatly looked up to by a host of lesser luminaries, the phrase was at once caught up and repeated from one to another, till, before long, it came to be Francine's accepted designation among such of the community as could not forgive Austin Chalgrave for having brought "a stranger whom nobody knew anything about," to be mistress of Dene Park.

the mere casual tourist's acquaintance with

CHAPTER II.

On the fifth morning after Austin Chalgrave had left home, Francine was strolling listlessly in the garden, at a loss how best to get through the long autumn day with no more enlivening company than that of Aunt Pell, when the noise of footsteps on the gravel behind her caused her to turn her head. Next moment a cry broke from her, and she ran to meet the new-comer, holding out both her hauds.

"Uncle Ambrose! Can it be really you?" she exclaimed, as she kissed him impulsively on both cheeks. "I can't tell you how happy it makes me to see you. I am more glad than you can think. But you look anxious and worried; nothing amiss with the business, I hope. But tell

me, first of all, how aunt is."

She had linked an arm affectionately in one of his, and almost unconsciously had turned with him in the direction of the house.

"It's about your aunt, my dear, that I've come to see you. She's ill, Francine—very ill. Being at Ockminster this week—only thirty miles away—nothing would content her but that I must come over and see you, and hear from your own lips that you are well and happy. But it was all to satisfy your aunt, my dear, or else I wouldn't have ventured to

intrude."

"It's no intrusion, Uncle Ambrose; and my husband would say the same if he were here. Poor dear aunt! how grieved I am to hear that she is ill! If it will be any consolation to her, you may tell her that no one could be more happy and comfortable than I am."

"Ah! now she'll have no cause to worry about you any longer."

Presently Francine said:

"Do you know what I've a great mind to do, Uncle Ambrose? To go back with you to Ockminster on purpose to see Aunt Celestine! You may not be so near Dene Park again for goodness knows how long; and it seems a shame to let the opportunity go by."

Uncle Ambrose stopped suddenly, and

looked very hard at her.

"My dear child, if you only could!" he said, "if you only could! I believe that to have you with her, if only for an hour or two, would do your aunt more good than all the doctors' stuff in the world."

He was a man of sixty, and when in his prime must have been eminently good-looking. He had a plentiful head of hair, worn rather long, and a small imperial; both one and the other being in colour a deep, lustrous black. Black, too, were his clothes, about which there was a roomy ease which proved that at his time of life he studied comfort rather than elegance. Of the same sombre hue was the black satin stock, full six inches in depth, and fastened with a buckle behind, after the style of forty years ago, the flowing ends of which were held in their place by a large cameo pin.

"Come indoors and have some breakfast," said Francine, "and then we will see

what can be done."

A consultation of the time-table informed her that there was a train from Market Welby to Ockminster at noon, and a return train at seven p.m., by availing herself of which she would be able to spend about six hours in her aunt's company. Half an hour later uncle and niece were on their way to the station.

Six o'clock brought Aunt Pell a brief telegram to the effect that Mrs. Chalgrave had decided to stay overnight at Ockminster, and that the dog-cart was to be at the station to meet her at eleven o'clock

next forenoon.

By half-past eleven next day she was

back at home.

Aunt Pell, who was a keen-sighted lady in her way, did not fail to notice that there was a restlessness, an inability to remain long in one place, or to settle down to any occupation or employment for more than a few minutes at a time, the like of which she had never noticed in Francine before.

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for nothing," remarked the old lady, sagely, to herself. "There's something more under the surface than she's willing to let be seen."

It wanted a few minutes to six o'clock when, as Aunt Pell was crossing the entrance-hall, she came full on Francine, evidently on the point of going out—in fact, the brougham was already waiting for her at the door. She was dressed as the elder lady had never seen her dressed before—in black from head to foot, with a thick veil, which hid the upper part of her face, but possibly was not quite such an effective disguise as she believed it to be.

"I am going into Welby to do a little special shopping," she said. "I will endeavour to get back in time for dinner; but should I not do so, I beg that you

won't wait for me."

Francine disliked the brougham, and rarely used it, except when going with her husband to a dinner-party, or ball. As a rule she either rode, or drove in the dog-cart; yet here she was, on this fine August afternoon, going out with something of an air of mystery—of disguise, it might almost be said—in a vehicle which she ordinarily contemned!

Aunt Pell shook her head, and rubbed one mittened hand softly over the other as

she gazed after her.

In all probability she would have shaken her head still more emphatically had she been there to see how Francine, leaving the brougham waiting in a secluded lane, went forward into the town alone, her veil carefully lowered; and how, after an absence of about half an hour, she came back, still alone, and, re-entering the brougham, was driven home.

Next day, Francine was dull and apathetic to a degree. Of her restlessness of the day before there was not a trace left. She complained of a slight headache, and sat the morning through on a rocking-chair on the verandah, with a novel on her lap, but making no pretence of reading it. Of appetite, either at breakfast or luncheon,

she had none.

About half-past six she ordered Sweetlips, her favourite mare, to be brought round, and went upstairs and donned her

riding-habit.

"This headache is driving me distracted," she said to Aunt Pell. "I will go for a gallop, and try whether that will have any effect on it."

When she came down, she found the

groom waiting to accompany her on her ride as usual.

"I am not going far, Dyce, and shall not need you," she said to the man.

She rode at a slow, swinging canter as far as Dudham Spinney, an extensive covert of young trees and brushwood, about two miles from the Park. It was a lonely spot, and not a creature was in sight as she dismounted. Leading Sweetlips well into the shelter of the Spinney, she fastened her to a tree, and then went forward alone, holding up the skirt of her habit with one hand, and having her riding-whip in the other, till she found herself in a little glade, or clearance, in the heart of the wood. Her lips were hard-set, and her brows drawn together till they nearly met, while in her eyes there shone a sort of dall, lurid light, which would have come as a revelation to Austin Chalgrave, had he been there to

For a moment she pressed a hand to her heart while she gazed around. The next, a man stepped from behind a clump of trees and confronted her.

She eyed him for a second or two as she might have eyed some loathsome reptile. Then, in her iciest tones, she said:

"It is well that you are punctual. Have you brought what was agreed upon ?"

"They are here;" touching the breastpocket of his coat. "And you?"

"What I promised I am here to perform. Give me the letters, and the money is yours."

He was a tall, thin man, probably not more than thirty years of age, but looking considerably older. There was an assumption of jauntiness both in his dress and manner; but it was a jauntiness which had evidently been put on for the occasion. Although he wore an orchid in his buttonhole, his clothes had the appearance of not having been brushed for a month, while the soiled glove he carried in his right hand was not the fellow to the one he wore on his left.

From the pocket of her habit Francine brought out a porte-monnaie, and, opening it, extracted therefrom a number of banknotes which had evidently been placed there in readiness. Meanwhile Laforge, for such was his name, with tremulous fingers and an evil smile on his lips, was slowly unbuttoning his coat. When this was accomplished he drew from the breast-pocket a thin bundle of letters tied round with dingy white ribbon.

"Behold them," he said, "six in all. Count them, if you doubt my word. They are the last links of a love which at one time I fondly hoped would last as long as life itself. It grieves me to the heart to be compelled to part with them; but I am poor—very poor. With them I bid adieu to the romance of my youth, to happy days now vanished for ever."

He spoke with a cynical leer, which caused Francine's soul to turn sick within

her.

Still leering at her out of the corners of his red-rimmed eyes, he pressed the letters to his lips, and then proffered them with one hand, while holding out the other in readiness to clutch the notes. A shiver ran through Francine as her fingers closed over the letters. After one glance at them she thrust them into her pocket. Laforge, after counting the notes, put them carefully away and rebuttoned his coat. Francine, her object accomplished, was on the point of turning away, when Laforge spoke again:

"And are we to part thus, sweet Francine, without one little kiss, or even one touch of the hand—you and I, who used to live only for each other!" As before, there was a ring of bitter mockery in his words. "But no! If you can part with me thus coldly, I cannot so part from you. I am not made of ice. I love you more at this moment than ever before. Not thus shall you leave me. One kiss at least I will claim in memory of other

days!"

He strode forward as if to seize her. As he did so Francine receded a step, and the same instant her whip came down with a sharp hiss, and smote him across the face. An imprecation broke from his lips, and with one arm held up to shield his face from a second lash, he fell back a pace or two in sheer amazement. Then, with clenched hands and a snarl which severed his blue-white lips and bared his teeth, he gathered himself for a spring. But at that moment an ominous click smote his ear; and there, in a line with his eyes, he beheld Francine's extended hand grasping a revolver.

"Coward!" she exclaimed, in clear, cold tones. "Come but one step nearer, and I will shoot you down like the dastard

and cur that you are !"

On the instant the fellow's face faded to a sickly, greenish hue; a craven terror leapt into his eyes; he seemed to shrink visibly in size as he stood there. For a few seconds they confronted each

"So!" said Laforge, at last, with a futile attempt at a sneer. "This is your game, is it? Well! you have won for the present; but if you think that you have done with Victor Laforge, you were never more mistaken, as you will quickly find. You shall hear further from me, madame, in the course of a day or two. We part, but only to meet again."

Half a minute later Francine was

alone

Neither of them, at the instant Francine lashed Laforge across the face, had seen an arm part the bushes a little way from where they were standing, as if the owner of it were about to declare himself. But the branches closed again when the Frenchman fell back in terror at sight of the revolver.

CHAPTER III.

It was on the evening of the day following that of Francine's adventure in Dudham Spinney, that Austin Chalgrave reached home in a fly hired at the railway-station. He had not been expected for another week, and had sent no word of his coming. Aunt Pell met him in the entrance-hall, half-a-dozen questions fluttering on her lips; but there was something in his face which warned her that for the present it would be advisable to keep them back.

"Where's Francine?" he demanded,

abruptly.

"In her own room, where she has been all day. She's suffering from one of her sick headaches."

Without another word he strode

upstairs.

Francine, who had seen him as he drove up in the fly, was standing in the doorway of her dressing-room as he mounted the stairs. She had not changed her morning wrapper for any other dress, and her unbound hair fell in heavy masses over her shoulders. She did not spring forward to receive him, as she would have done at another time, but waited for him with the immobility of a statue.

"Back before my time, dear, as you see," he said, cheerily, as he took both her hands in his. "Why I am so, I will explain

later on."

He drew her towards him, and made as though he would have kissed her.

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till you have heard what I am about to tell you. After that, most likely you will never want to kiss me sgain."

"Oh, indeed," he answered, with a short laugh, "we shall very soon know all about that." Speaking thus, he drew her into the room, and shut the door. "And now, what is this terrible news which is to have such a remarkable effect on me?" he said, resting a hand on each of her shoulders, and looking her steadily in the face.

She drew a deep breath, and, bending forward a little, let her forehead rest for a moment or two against his shoulder. When she lifted her head he could see the mark left by her teeth on her under-lip in her effort to control her emotion. There was no vestige of colour in her face; her eyes were dry and burning, and looked as if they were athirst for the relief of tears. She pointed to a chair, and then seated herself in another a little distance away.

"Three days ago," she began, "I was surprised by a visit from Uncle Ambrose. He is at Ockminster for the week, and, being so near, he had come over to see me. Aunt Celestine is very ill. Not knowing when I might have another opportunity, I went back with him by the first train in order to spend a few hours with my aunt. My intention had been to return the same evening; but while Uncle Ambrose was away, Mademoiselle de Laune-she who succeeded me as 'Queen of the Haute École'-had been suddenly taken ill, and could not possibly appear that evening. It was a 'bespoke night.' The mayor and the officers at the barracks had taken tickets, and uncle was nearly at his wits' end; the officers, especially, having expressed a great desire to see Mademoiselle de Laune. It grieved me much to see poor uncle so put about; and on the impulse of the moment I offered to stay and take mademoiselle's place in the programme. It was very wrong and foolish of me; but I did it. In my riding-habit and hat, and with a 'fall,' which reached to within halfan-inch of my mouth, no one among the audience knew me for other than Made-I could not have moiselle de Laune. rested without telling you. Can you forgive me 1"

Leaving her last question unanswered,

Chalgrave said:

"You are mistaken; there was one person among the audience who recognised you the moment you rode into the ring."

She drew in her breath quickly, as if some one had struck her.

"Surely—surely you must be mistaken," she exclaimed. "With my features hidden by the veil, who could possibly know me?"

"Your husband," he answered, quietly.

"Oh! You there?"

"Even so; and, strange as the coincidence may seem, the explanation is a very simple one." He then went on to tell her how Protheroe-one of the men he had met at the shooting party in Yorkshire—had been taken seriously ill; how the local doctor had advised his immediate removal; how he, Chalgrave, had proffered to see the sick man safe to his home at Ockminster; how, while strolling about the Ockminster streets, his attention had been attracted by an immense poster, announcing that "Perrin's Renowned Cirque de l'Univers" was there "for six nights only." And how he there and then made up his mind to revisit the old "tent," under the canvas roof of which he had once on a time spent so many happy hours. "But when you, Francie, rode into the ring on your 'coal-black Andalusian barb, Don Gomez,'" he went on, "I recognised you in a moment; and then I had, indeed, need to ask myself whether I was awake or dreaming. I watched you go through the act with all the grace and aplomb of other days; and when it came to an end, no hands applauded more vigorously than mine. Next evening I was at the circus again; but Mademoiselle Francine was conspicuous by her absence. I could, of course, have gone to good old Uncle Ambrose, and have learnt from him the why and wherefore of my wife's appearance on the scene of her old triumphs; but such a course did not recommend itself to me. I chose rather to wait and see whether she would tell me about it of her own accord. My confidence in her has been justified: she has told me."

"And can you forgive me ?" demanded

Francine, for the second time.

"I will try my best to do so," he answered, with a smile which conveyed far more than his words.

She gave him an answering smile; but there was nothing of gladness in it. Then she rose abruptly and crossed to the window, and stood looking out. Chalgrave's eyes followed her.

"Does she intend her confession to end here?" he asked himself; "or is that other strange episode about to be included

in it?"

"Now that we have each of us had our

say, and the thing's explained and done with, am I not to be rewarded with a kiss?" he asked, as his wife came slowly

back from the window.

"All has not yet been said; far from it." She sat down as before, on a low chair a little way removed from him. "Years ago, before I knew you," she went on, "I fancied myself in love with a young man of the name of Victor Laforge. He was a member of my uncle's troupe; very clever on the trapeze, and very good-looking. I was a child of sixteen at the time, and he fascinated me. There is no other word to express the feeling with which he inspired me, for assuredly it was not love, as that word has since come to be understood by me. I was his employer's niece, and he encouraged me, thinking, possibly, that it would not be a bad thing for him if, by-and-by, he could make me his wife. After a time, however, he was tempted by the offer of more money to join another troupe. A little later came the news of his marriage. I shed a great many foolish tears at first; but, by the time I was a year older, the image of Victor Laforge had become but a faded memory which rarely intruded itself into my thoughts, and never without an inward blush. Conceive, then, my surprise when, in the stable-help who assisted me to mount Don Gomez, I recognised Laforge! To such a condition had he sunk. After the performance, he contrived to secure two minutes in private with me, when, wretch that he is! he threatened that unless I gave him a hundred pounds in exchange for certain foolish letters—six in number—which I had been weak enough to write to him during the period of my infatuation, and which he had still by him, he would expose me by forwarding them to my husband."

"You set the scoundrel at defiance, I

in Austin.

"Would to Heaven that I had! But his threat frightened me. I had no time to think. I agreed to meet him next evening but one in Dudham Spinney, when he was to bring the letters, and I, if possible, the money. Oh! it was weak and foolish of me; I feel and know it now."

"If you had but sent for me!" mut-

tered Chalgrave.

"And now comes another shameful thing for me to have to tell you. I had ment. "If I wish you to leave me! What paid away the greater part of my quarter's on earth are you talking about ?"

allowance, and there was only one way in which I could make up the amount demanded by Laforge.

She paused, and for a few moments the pallor of her cheeks was ousted by a

vivid blush.

"And that way?" asked her husband,

quietly.

"Was by pawning my jewels," she answered, in a low voice, covering her face with her hands.

"My poor Francie! What you must have gone through before you made up your mind to do that! But go on. You met

the fellow."

"I met him, as appointed, and handed over the money to him, and he gave me in return what I believed, at the time, to be the whole of my letters. Then he insulted me, and I lashed him across the face with my whip. Then he would have seized me; but I had taken the precaution to arm myself with one of your revolvers, and as, like all cowards, he sets a high value on his worthless life, he did not choose to face it, but slunk away."

"Shall I tell her by what simple means it came to pass that I was an unseen witness of the interview in the Spinney?" asked Chalgrave of himself. "Yes, I will tell her; but not till later on. She has

not yet brought her confession to an end." "My intention was to burn the letters, the moment I reached home," resumed Francine: "but when I came to untie the bundle, I found how I had been tricked. There were two of my letters, one at the top, and another at the bottom; but between them there was nothing but blank paper. Laforge had kept back four out of the six letters.

"The villain—the unmitigated villain!"

ejaculated Chalgrave.

"Then I understood the meaning of his parting threat, that I had not seen the hope, and bade him do his worst," broke last of him, but that I should hear from him again before long."

> "Of course, having succeeded in getting a hundred pounds out of you on such ridiculously easy terms, he hopes to be able to sell you the rest of the letters for as much more. But I fancy that, this time, he has reckoned without his host."

> "And now I have told you everything," said Francine, with a half sob in her voice. "If you wish me to leave you, I will go quietly away, without a word to any one.

> Austin stared at her in sheer astonish-

"After what I have told you, you can never care for me as you did before."

"Oh, indeed! that's your idea, is it?" he answered, with his short laugh, as he went and sat down beside her, and drawing her to him, kissed her tenderly. "Why, what a goose you must be, Francie, to let such a thought enter your head for one moment! Leave me, indeed! Not for-but there! I've no patience even to speak of such a thing."

"But I have deceived you—shamefully deceived you-and-

"Hush, my dear! You must not say You are letting your tongue run away with you. You have not deceived me. In asserting that you have, you are making a mountain out of a molehill, as I am afraid your sex is too often in the habit of doing. That you were weak and foolish, in allowing yourself to be frightened by Laforge's threats into meeting him and paying him the hundred pounds, I am willing to admit; but I dare say that, in your place, the majority of women would have done the same. Now listen to a plain man's view of the whole affair."

He kissed her again. Her head was resting on his shoulder, and the tears, so long denied her, were falling as softly as

summer rain. "In the first place," resumed Chalgrave, "you did quite right to help your uncle out of the predicament he found himself in, owing to the illness of Mademoiselle de Laune. Had I been asked, I should certainly have sanctioned your doing as you did. Even had you been recognised by any of our Market Welby friends, I should have cared little about it; for, although I have not thought it necessary to advertise the fact that my wife was, at one time, known as-to quote the old jargon - the 'world-renowned Queen of the Haute Ecole,' no faintest blush would tinge my cheek if it were trumpeted forth

next market-day from the steps of Welby Town Hall. I am proud of my wife, not ashamed of her; and her position in life before I married her is a matter which concerns myself alone. And, now, as regards that scoundrel, Laforge, moment he threatened you, you should have communicated at once with me, and have left me to deal with him. To pay him a hundred pounds for a few trumpery letters, which were really not worth as many pence, was a piece of folly on your part, dear, such as I am glad to think you will never have the chance of perpetrating again. Not one penny of blackmail would he have got out of me.'

"But I could not bear to let you think that I had even fancied I cared for any one before I learnt to care for youalthough I was little more than a child at the time!"

"Foolish girl! What could it have mattered? See what a pother you have got yourself into, all about a thing of no consequence."

"But he has still four of the letters in his possession."

"We shall hear from him in the course of a post or two, never fear. He will name his price for the rest of the letters, and demand an interview. I will meet him in your place."

"And you will decline to give him anything for the letters?"

"Most assuredly. Don't you see that, if I refuse to buy them, they at once become of no value—no better than so much waste paper, in point of fact? I shall take the wind out of his sails most completely

by refusing to treat with him at any price, while, if he should be so ill-advised as to attempt to annoy you in any way in time to come, we shall see whether the farreaching arm of the Law won't avail to protect you. Make your mind easy, sweetest, you have seen and heard the last of Victor Laforge."





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